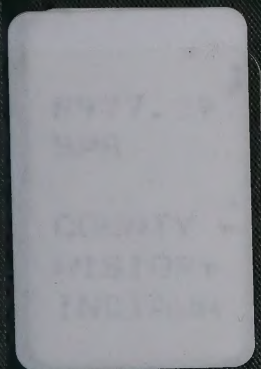
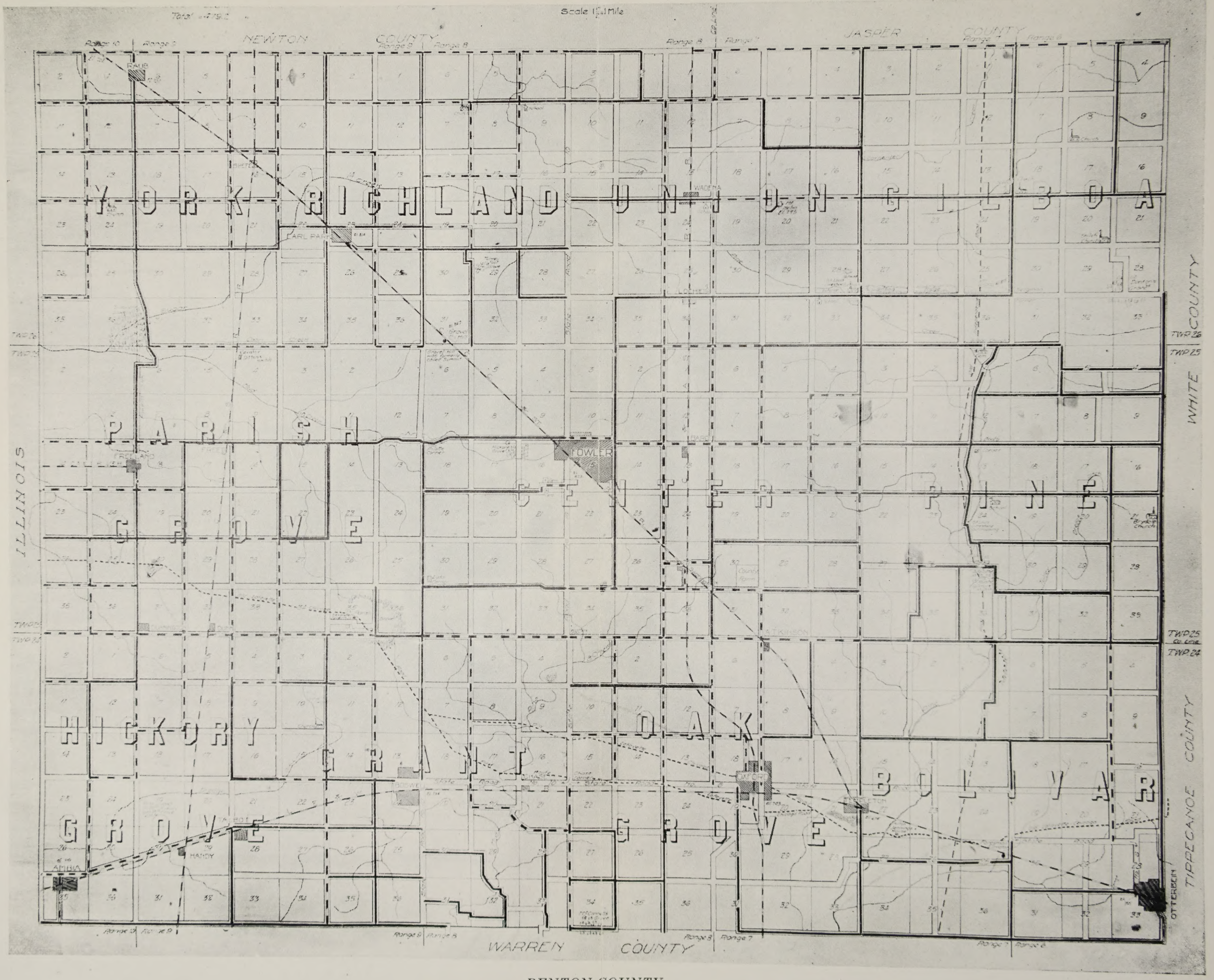
Annals of Benton County

ELMORE BARCE

Volume I





BENTON COUNTY

Annals of Benton County

By Elmore Barce
Member Indiana Historical Society

Volume One of a Series of Articles on Benton County from the date of its organization.

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1925.

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Maps by Dean Whicker.

Dedicated to

RAY JONES,

My Friend.

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Preface

IT is with genuine pleasure that the author undertakes to write these Annals of the county. It will be a labor requiring some considerable time for its completion, but it will be a labor of love, as we have always admired the sturdy citizenry of this community. To penetrate these rugged prairies, to struggle and endure here under adverse conditions, to meet with storms, cold, pestilence and privation were no mean tasks —they required the faith and patience, the brain and brawn of a superior race. But among the men who early came to these plains were many of that heroic blood that had fought in the First and Second Wars for Independence, that had met the savage and the wilderness, or that had followed Harrison at Tippecanoe. They came here with their wives and children, their oxen and their plows, and they came determined to stay. They built their cabins—traced out their meagre roads over the great savannas and fought with fire, flood and malaria. In the end they won, for they also brought with them a deep and abiding faith in all things sacred—the love of law and a respect for the ways of civilization. By the side of the fane whose spire pointed up into the face of God, they built the schoolhouse and the freeman's forum and raised their sons to the rule of right.

How great a work hath been wrought here! Where wolves howled and great flocks of wild geese filled the swamp lands, the golden harvest

ripens and long rows of tasseling corn fill all the plain. Toward the cities the great highways stretch and homes of plenty and comfort fill all the land. The generations who toiled and struggled here with but scant reward, have been succeeded in turn by the grandsons and granddaughters, who inherit the earth, and garner in the fruits thereof.

Nor is this, as has been claimed, a weaker race than that which went before. Otherwise all this sacrifice has been in vain. The men and women of today have shed no dishonor on the names of their forbears. They live in a freer and a better air, surrounded by better conditions, and they have grown in stature both morally and physically. No finer body of men ever marched forth from these prairies to do and to die for the eternal right than the soldiers of the World War. No fairer or more enlightened daughters of men have ever dwelt here than those of today.

The whole truth is, that with the passing of the old, grim days, much of error and prejudice passed with them. Those of the present see with a broader vision and in a clearer light, and much of the folly and superstition of former days has been cast aside. Sometimes we may think otherwise, but let us make no mistake. For despite the croakings of the pessimist and the misanthrope, this is a better age and as time goes on, mankind will walk with heads more erect and in a fuller day.

Fowler, Indiana, March 19, 1925.

CHAPTER I.

Thomas Hart Benton

THE COVERED WAGON

WHEN Benton County was organized in the year 1840, the leading and outstanding statesman of the West was Thomas H. Benton, United States Senator from the State of Missouri. For thirty years he stood in the halls of the national Congress and plead the cause of the pioneer and the settler west of the Alleghanies, as against the older orders of the East—plead for national growth and expansion along the old trails of the red man—and firmly declared that the future wealth and glory of the Republic must come from the grassy plains watered by the Father of Waters and its many tributaries. Other men of that day were often narrow and sectional in their views and looked with disdain upon what they termed as the "savages" and "barbarians" of the western country, but Benton above all was a patriot who believed in the whole Republic, east and west, north and south. At the heads of those who halted in the Treaty with Spain he hurled these words: "The magnificent valley of the Mississippi is ours, with all its fount-

ains, springs and floods; and woe to the statesman who shall undertake to surrender one drop of its water, one inch of its soil to any foreign power."

Thomas H. Benton came of good colonial stock and was born near Hillsborough, North Carolina, on March 14, 1782. His father was a lawyer, but dying when Benton was but a lad, the mother and her children moved to the wilderness of Tennessee, there founding a little town known as Bentontown. The boy's studies at Chapel Hill, the University of North Carolina, were thus interrupted, but he was such an indefatigable reader that he afterwards acquired not only an extensive knowledge of law, but of Latin, history and English literature. Webster said of him, after years of association in the Senate, that he knew more political facts than any other man he had ever met, even than John Quincy Adams, and possessed a wonderful fund of general knowledge. When an old man over seventy years of age, he turned his pen to literary subjects and compiled the "Thirty Years View," or "a History of the working of the American government for thirty years, from 1820 to 1850," and later added "The Abridgement of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856." Both are invaluable works and fully and faithfully portray the political history of the government for the respective periods covered. The closing words of the "Abridgement" were dictated by Benton in a whisper as he lay on his deathbed.

Two powerful factors contributed to the moulding of young Benton's career. The first was the

influence of his mother, who early undertook the training of his mind, and who studied with him works on history and the biography of the ancients. Thus were laid the foundations of that wonderful power of memory which in later years served him so well in the national councils. Although a Virginian, his mother also practiced the austere principles and virtues of the early Puritans, and in an age of strong drink and gambling, preserved to the utmost the rigid rules of decency and decorum, positively frowning on all intemperance and forbidding a pack of cards within her doors. Needless to say that Benton always regarded his mother with the profoundest respect, and to the end of his days always held all womankind in honor and reverence. He was a most kind and affectionate husband, and late in life when his wife was stricken with paralysis, he never left her except to attend to his public duties, and consoled her years of suffering by writing at her bedside.

The second great factor that controlled young Benton was the nature of the wilderness community into which he was thrown, and the character of the men with whom he there associated. Nashville was then a frontier town bordering upon the great unexplored regions of the West. Around it swarmed savage tribes of red men who had not wholly laid aside the war-club and the hatchet. In fact their great trails passed immediately through the neighboring settlements. The rough, almost lawless race of frontiersmen from Virginia

and the Carolinas, and whom Roosevelt has justly lauded as the vanguard of a new empire, had penetrated the mountain passes of the Blue Ridge rifle in hand, had built their rude stockades and forts, and were now firmly resolved on holding their own. To say that they were poor, uneducated, rough and uncouth—given over to drinking, gambling, horseracing and cock-fighting—is but to recount their vices without relating their many sterling virtues. They were bold, independent, fearless and undaunted, to the last degree. They had not advanced under the shadow and protection of the federal armies, but were lords and conquerors of all the land by virtue of their own might. They hated a coward and a poltroon. They looked upon the perils of the wilderness with unquailing eye, and with stout hearts and brawny arms they carried forward the standards of the Republic. Lastly, and more important to note than all, they believed in the doctrine of "Manifest Destiny," that is to say, that it was the destiny of America to at last conquer and hold the territory of all surrounding nations.

At the close of the war of 1812, Benton moved to the thriving town of St. Louis, and there engaged in the practice of law. He rapidly rose to the head of his profession, and took an active part in the admission of Missouri to the Federal Union in the year 1821. He was immediately chosen by the first legislature as a member of the United States Senate, and held that position continuously for the next thirty years. He be-

Pioneer Home of Milton Jennings—1846

came the associate of Webster, Clay and Calhoun and one of the leading exponents of Jacksonian Democracy, although in the days of his youth he had actually engaged in a duel with sturdy "Old Hickory."

To attempt to analyze here, and explain the hold of Andrew Jackson upon the people of the west is not the purpose of this chapter, but suffice it to say that he was the first President of the Republic to come from beyond the Alleghanies—that he was an old Indian fighter and a hater of the British—that he was the hero of New Orleans when the red-coats of Packenham had gone down in thousands before the merciless fire of the Tennessee and Kentucky riflemen—that in voting for him every freeman and pioneer of the west believed that he was voting for a man of the people—one of his own class and opinions. To add to all, Jackson was not only a man of invincible courage, but he was a patriot and a lover of his country, and believed, as all western men firmly believed, in its future glorious destiny. He had no use for a traitor or a disunionist.

In the years to come when the great fight was on between Jackson and the "Nullifiers" of South Carolina—when Jackson threatened to hang Calhoun "higher than Haman"—no statesman stood more valiantly at the side of his chief, or spoke grander words in favor of the Federal Union than Thomas H. Benton, and to his dying hour he never lost faith in the justice and honor of the United States government.

Benton's great interest in the settlement and development of the western lands, and in the encouragement of that sturdy body of yeomanry which has always contributed the backbone of the Republic, is worthy of note. He early favored a homestead law, and always contended that the public lands should be sold on easy terms to those who intended to till the soil. Sales to large land companies and speculators he condemned. In Van Buren's administration he fathered a pre-emption law, giving to the actual settler the privilege of first purchase of any land to which the Indian title had been extinguished. He would listen to no argument barring aliens from the possession or ownership of land, for the great thing that the West was striving for from 1840 onward, was a large immigration and the building up of the country. He rightly argued that the alien who wished to engage in the pursuit of agriculture could be considered neither a pauper nor a criminal, and could not be compared with the squalid and shiftless foreigner who sought the great cities. The thousands of stalwart Germans, hard-working Irish and industrious Scandinavians who have contributed to the material growth of the nation, are full justification for Benton's position. Citizenship followed as a matter of course—the second generation were true sons of the soil.

In the early "Forties" Great Britain and the United States were contending for the possession and mastery of the famous Oregon country watered by the Columbia river and bordered on

the west by the Pacific. America based her claims upon the exploits of Captain Gray, of Boston, who in 1792 reached the mouth of the Columbia and named it in honor of his good ship—upon the expedition of Lewis and Clark who in the Jefferson administration ascended the waters of the Missouri, pierced the difficult passes of the Rockies and finally emerged upon the western coast—and finally, upon the posts and settlements of John Jacob Astor, the American fur trader, at Astoria. To gain access to the great western seas meant not only the extension of the Republic from ocean to ocean, greater maritime and commercial advantages, but rendered it physically impossible for any foreign power to successfully dispute our ultimate sovereignty over the entire continent.

To those who have recently witnessed the great western movie drama, entitled "The Covered Wagon," it may be of interest to relate that the scenes depicted are based in part upon the actual facts. In the year 1842 "a huge caravan of over a thousand Americans made the journey overland from the frontiers of Missouri, taking with them their wives and their children, their flocks and herds, carrying their long rifles on their shoulders, and their axes and spades in the great canvas-topped wagons. The next year, two thousand more settlers of the same sort in their turn crossed the vast plains, wound their way among the Rocky Mountains through the pass explored by (John C.) Fremont, Benton's son-in-law, and

after suffering every kind of hardship and danger, and warding off the attacks of hostile Indians, descended the western slope of the great watershed to join their fellows on the banks of the Columbia."

It is unnecessary to state that the whole West was fairly aflame at these brilliant exploits—that England was at last forced to concede the coveted territory to the United States, and to withdraw her forts and soldiers farther to the north. No one was more heartily in sympathy with these movements than Thomas H. Benton, who introduced a bill to grant six hundred and forty acres of land to every settler, and more if he had a family. Thus would he hold out inducement to the brave men who were thus advancing the outposts of civilization. When told that this action might bring on an armed conflict with England, he boldly replied that, "Neither nations nor individuals ever escaped danger by fearing it. They must face it and defy it." A cowardly administration for a time thwarted the purposes of Benton and his associates, but in the end Oregon was ours.

The closing days of Benton's great career were far the mightiest. For years this grand old follower of Jackson had fought all the insidious attacks of Calhoun and his confederates, aimed at the national government. Although a Southerner and born in the South, he loved the Union, and bitterly fought to the last all attempts at secession or dismemberment. In 1851, however,

the slave-holding oligarchy of the South were in the ascendent and Benton at last lost his seat in the Senate. Throughout all the long period of his service he had remained scrupulously honest and absolutely fearless. We copy these words from Roosevelt: "It is scant praise to say that, while mere acquiescence on his part would have enabled him to become rich through government influence, he nevertheless died a poor man. In public, as in private life, he was a man of sensitive purity of character; he would never permit any person connected with him by blood or marriage to accept office under the government, nor would he ever favor any applicant for a government contract on political grounds."

Benton died in Washington, D. C., April 10, 1858.

This is the man for whom Benton County was named.

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THE COVERED WAGON

Speaking of the long lines of covered wagons that traveled over the plains to Oregon, recalls a very pleasant visit.

On Sunday, September 7th, 1924, I had a personal interview with George H. Jennings, who, together with his good wife, Lida, was then residing with his son, Finch Jennings, on a farm in Bolivar Township, about one mile and a quarter from the place where Mr. Jennings was born.

The life of this man is worthy of relation. He is now past eighty-two years of age, having first seen the light of day on the banks of Big Pine Creek, about one-half mile east of the present town of Templeton, on March 29, 1842, about two years after the organization of the county. He has witnessed the evolution of the prairies from a wilderness of wild grass into the smiling landscape of the present day filled with gardens and with pleasant fields—he saw, when a lad, herds of wild deer, one hundred to one hundred-fifty in number crossing the fords of Pine to escape the prairie fires and heading for the waters of the Wabash—he has been lost when a boy, in the great stretches of the plains and has camped under the stars to await the rising of the morning sun. He exhibited an old counterfeit ten dollar gold piece taken by his father, Milton Jennings, while acting as the first treasurer of the county in the early 40's. The center was of iron and this was cunningly concealed by an outer coat of burnished metal. In his house is a little old writing desk with two drawers, made from the wood of the wild cherry and fashioned by the hand of his uncle, Basil Justus, the first Clerk of the Commissioners' Court of Benton County, and at

one time the Clerk of the Circuit Court. On this desk were penned the first records of the county, written with a goose quill.

The date of his father's settlement on the banks of Big Pine is now lost in abscurity. As near as Mr. Jennings is able to state, this event took place about the year 1833. The first house was a double log cabin, built on an elevation on the east side of Pine, about twenty or thirty rods back from the stream, with a large grove of walnut and sugar to the south. To this home was brought Martha Finch, the mother of the subject of this sketch. She was a sister of George B. Finch and of Mrs. William R. Johnson, of Pine Township, and she, together with her brothers and sisters, had been brought forward from Pickaway County, Ohio, by Basil Justus, the uncle. The second house built by Milton Jennings was erected in the years 1846 and 1847, and is still standing, but the vines of the trumpet flower have penetrated its walls and the old brick fire-place is fast falling to ruin. The lumber for this house was furnished by David Miller, of Cass County, Indiana, proprietor of the old Union Mills. A bill was made out for it on the second day of May, 1846 and signed in duplicate by the said Miller and Milton Jennings. It was forwarded by way of the old Wabash and Erie Canal—was unloaded on the banks of this canal at Lafayette and hauled over the old Lafayette Road with ox teams to its present location. The bill for this lumber is still in the possession of the Jennings family and amounted in all to one

hundred thirty-one dollars. The same material today would cost better than two thousand dollars. It was composed of the finest oak, black walnut and poplar, and was entirely free of knots. The doors, window sashes and panels were all fashioned on the ground after delivery, and the work on the mantel over the old fire-place is most cunningly wrought.

Mr. Jennings' recollection of his father, Milton Jennings, is meagre, for early in his life the father died and was buried in the old Griffin cemetery southeast of Templeton. His mother later married Isaac Templeton, father of Lee and Colonel William J. Templeton. While yet a youth, Mr. Jennings was thrown under the tutelage of Melissa Templeton, his sister, and wife of the Colonel, who was six or eight years his senior, and she insisted on his attendance at a school in Lafayette. Mr. Jennings remembers that this school was conducted in the basement of an old church in that city. While attending school he lived with White Anderson, his uncle, who had married his mother's sister, Ruth Finch. Anderson at that time was foreman for Henry L. Ellsworth.

This very interesting old pioneer came to Fowler on business in the summer of 1924. His mind was still alert. We insisted on his seeing "The Covered Wagon." His eye-sight was dim, but after selecting a very good seat he was enabled to see the long line of canvas-topped wagons, said that they looked very natural, and

that in the early 50's he had seen thousands of them crossing the great prairies in Benton County, on their road to Iowa and the great Northwest. He remarked at once, however, that someone had evidently forgotten the old tar-bucket hanging under the rear axle, and the linchpin. The tar was used to grease the spindles and the linchpin held the wheel on the axle. He also made the remark when he saw the oxen swimming the great river, that oxen were as a rule, very much better swimmers than horses.

CHAPTER II.

The Northwest Territory

NOTES ON OUR CITIZENSHIP.

BENTON County being a part of the great State of Indiana, and it in turn being a part of the old original Northwest Territory, something may be said as to how that domain came into the possession of the new Republic of the United States.

In the year 1777 the army of General John Burgoyne, invading the united colonies by way of lake Champlain and the north, suddenly found itself cooped up by the American forces at the Heights of Saratoga, and after a vain attempt to cut its way through, was compelled to surrender. Thus ended a bold but futile attempt to sever the new and struggling Republic in twain and then cut it up in detail. But a new and more appalling danger threatened from the west Since the Treaty of 1763 the British had come into the possession of all that vast territory north of the Ohio, south of the Great Lakes and west of the Allegheny mountains, which lay at the back door of the states of Pennsylvania and Virginia. That territory was inhabitated by the most war-like

tribes of red men in America, headed by the Miami confederacy, and it was now the secret purpose of Great Britain to arm these tribes with flint-lock and hatchet—descend upon the exposed settlements of the western frontier, and spread fire, desolation and terror on every hand. England was then the master of all the western waters, held the posts of Detroit, Michillimacinac, Vincennes and Kaskaskia, and soothed herself with the reflection that pursuit and retaliation were wholly impossible in a savage wilderness.

There was one fact, however, that the British had not taken into consideration. On the very eve of the Revolution, a thin stream of "long rifles" and hunting-shirt men from the states of Virginia and Pennsylvania, and who had followed the valleys of the Allegheny and Blue Ridge from north to south, suddenly broke through the western mountain barriers and flowed in diminutive rivulets into the basins of the Tennessee, the Ohio and the Cumberland, forming, as Theodore Roosevelt most strikingly says, "a shield of sinewy men thrust it between the people of the seaboard and the red warriors of the wilderness." In 1774, James Harrod built the first log cabin in Kentucky. On the 14th of June 1775, the first post of the white man was erected at Boonesborough.

In the month of December of this same year of 1777, there suddenly appeared before Patrick Henry, the Governor of Virginia, the stalwart

figure of George Rogers Clark, stained with the long and weary travel from the frontier settlements of Boone and Benjamin Logan. He brought the strange and alarming tale that the British officers at Detroit were offering bounties for American scalps—that they were fomenting the parties of marauders, who crossing the Ohio from the north, swept down upon the stockades and cabins of the south, burning and butchering, and bearing away defenseless women and children—that it was the fixed determination of the minions of Great Britain to drive the Kentuckians back across the Blue Ridge so that they (the British) might be free to invade the western borders. Clark now announced the bold plan of suddenly assuming the offensive—of striking and capturing the frontier posts of Kaskaskia and Vincennes, and later Detroit. Thus would the British be put upon the defensive, their prestige with the tribes be destroyed, and the exposed outposts and settlements of Virginia and Pennsylvania at once relieved from threatened attack. He went further and declared that this would at once add honor and renown to the Virginia arms, and might in the end result in the acquisition of a vast and profitable territory to the United States.

The Governor at once called into session the executive council composed of George Wythe, George Mason and Thomas Jefferson, and Clark's proposals were laid before them. The worthy Virginians of that day, including Washington, had long looked on the territory to the west with

longing eyes, but were now engaged in the desperate struggle of the Revolution, and were sadly lacking in money, ammunition and men. However, the executive council pledged their personal credit—Clark proceeded to Pittsburgh with some worthless Continental money in his pockets, succeeded in getting hold of some lead and muskets, and finally assembled about one hundred and seventy-five hunting-shirt men at the Falls of the Ohio at Louisville.

The march of these rude soldiers across the prairies of Illinois, the sudden seizure of Cahokia and Kaskaskia, the bold conduct of Clark in dealing with the surrounding savages, and the subsequent taking of Vincennes and the hoisting of the American flag, are among the most dramatic events in American history. The dismay and astonishment of the British commandant at Detroit, Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton, was complete. A handful of ragged American soldiers had not only accomplished the impossible, but had suddenly and completely won over all the French inhabitants and denizens of the west, and they were fast swearing allegiance to the American government.

The "hair-buyer" general, as Hamilton was called, was now forced to abandon his pet project of attacking Fort Pitt, and at once entered upon a campaign to retrieve the lost possessions and "sweep" the whole despised race of Kentuckians and Virginians out of the country. His scheme was a formidable one. With a thousand men, and

with cannon to demolish the stockades and destroy the frontier posts, he proposed to free the whole territory from American occupation and drive the settlers back across the mountains. To that end he descended the Wabash and recaptured the post at Vincennes. "Undoubtedly," says Roosevelt, "he would have carried out his plan, and have destroyed all the settlements west of the Alleghenies, had he been allowed to wait until the mild weather brought him his host of Indian allies and his reinforcements of regulars and militia from Detroit."

But George Rogers Clark was not the man to sit idly by and await a stroke. While Hamilton and his garrison were passing the winter months in fancied security and ease, Clark was re-organizing his tattered army of "long-knives" and Kentuckians, was recruiting small companies of the converted French, and had now entered upon the desperate enterprise of marching again across the bleak prairies, swimming the floods of the raging Wabash, and of suddenly surprising the British red-coats and compelling them to surrender. The very boldness of this plan insured its success. Instead of "sweeping" Kentucky, Hamilton and his officers were forced into a humiliating capitulation, were taken to the dungeons of Virginia and put in irons, and at the peace of 1783, the whole Northwest Territory, thanks to Clark and his soldiers, became the property of the United States of America.

The country thus conquered covered more than

two hundred forty-four thousand square miles of the earth's surface, and comprised what are now the states of Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin. Within its confines were boundless plains and prairies filled with grass; immense forest of oak, hickory, walnut, pine, beech and fur; enormous hidden treasures of coal, iron and copper. Add to all these natural resources, a fertile soil, a temperate climate, and unlimited facilities for commerce and trade, and no field was ever presented to the hand and genius of man, better adapted to form the homes and habitations of a free and enterprising people.

On the first day of March, 1784, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Hardy, Arthur Lee and James Mason, delegates in the Continental Congress from the commonwealth of Virginia, signed a deed of cession transferring all this vast domain to the United States, and it henceforth became the territory of the Federal government. This magnanimous action upon the part of the Old Dominion was taken to allay all jealousies between the states and to provide the basis for a fund to sink the national debt incurred under the Revolution. The only condition annexed to this deed was "that the territory so ceded shall be laid out and formed into states, containing suitable extent of territory, not less than one hundred nor more than one hundred fifty miles square, or as near thereto as circumstances will admit; and that the states so formed, shall be distinct republican states and admitted members of the Federal Union, having

the same rights of sovereignty, freedom, and independence, as the other states."

But it is the greatest glory of the statesmen of Virginia, that from the first they stood for the most liberal charter of government ever granted to a free people, to-wit, the Ordinance of 1787, passed and adopted as one of the last acts of the old Continental Congress on the 13th day of July, and entitled, "An Ordinance for the government of the territory of the United States northwest of the river Ohio." To guarantee unto the future citizens and inhabitants of said territory certain rights, immunities and privileges, which should remain forever unalterable except by common consent, the following, among other provisions, were ingrafted into said instrument as articles of compact between the original states and the people and states in the said territory:

"Article I. No person, demeaning himself in a peaceable and orderly manner, shall ever be molested on account of his mode of worship or religious sentiments, in the said territory."

"Article II. The inhabitants of the said territory shall always be entitled to the benefits of the writ of habeas corpus, and of the trial by jury; of a proportionate representation of the people in the legislature, and of judicial proceedings according to the course of the common law. All persons shall be bailable, unless for capital offenses, where the proof shall be evident, or the presumption great. All fines shall be moderate;

Old Fireplace in Jennings Home

and no cruel or unusual punishments shall be inflicted. No man shall be deprived of his liberty or property, but by the judgment of his peers, or the law of the land, and should the public exigencies make it necessary, for the common preservation, to take any person's property, or to demand his particular services, full compensation shall be made for the same. And, in the just preservation of rights and property, it is understood and declared, that no law ought ever to be made, or have force in the said territory, that shall, in any manner whatever, interfere with, or affect, private contracts or engagements, bona fide, and without fraud, previously formed."

"Article III. Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government, and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged. The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent; and in their property, rights, and liberty, they never shall be invaded or disturbed unless in just and lawful wars authorized by congress; but laws founded in justice and humanity shall from time to time be made, for preventing wrongs being done to them, and for preserving peace and friendship with them."

But the greatest provision of all, and which in the end had the most to do with the moulding of the future citizenry of Indiana and the whole Northwest, was Article VI, which provided that:

"There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." This article attracted to our borders all that great multitude of upright and freedom-loving men and women, who detested the institution of human slavery, and who afterwards did so much to preserve the integrity of the Union.

The strange fact is, that this great Ordinance was given to us by the South, and especially through the power and influence of the statesmen of Virginia. We close this chapter with the words of Bancroft:

"Thomas Jefferson first summoned congress to prohibit slavery in all the territory of the United States; Rufus King lifted up the measure when it lay almost lifeless on the ground, and suggested the immediate instead of the prospective prohibition; a congress composed of five southern states to one from New England, and two from the middle states, headed by William Grayson, supported by Richard Henry Lee, and using Nathan Dane as scribe, carried the measure to the goal in the amended form in which King had caused it to be referred to a committee; and, as Jefferson had proposed, placed it under the sanction of an irrevocable compact."

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NOTES

Some few years ago we looked over some old books and papers in the garret of the old Henry Robertson house, still standing on the eastern edge of Parish Grove. There we found the old copy of the Statutes of 1838, now in the Fowler Public Library. On the front cover were these words: "Samuel Robertson, Esq., Justice of the peace, December 3rd, A. D. 1838." Samuel Robertson, therefore, was a Justice of the Peace of Parish Grove before the organization of the county, and probably the first Justice of the Peace in this immediate territory. Samuel Robertson, was a brother of Henry Robertson, the man who started

the organization of Benton County in the year 1838. He, together with his brother Henry, rode through on horseback from Kentucky, in the year 1834, built a cabin on the eastern edge of Parish Grove, raised a patch of corn, and in the fall of the same year, brought forward the father, John Robertson. We shall write at length of these men later on. It is certain, however, that the Robertsons were attracted thither by the provisions of the great Ordinance outlined above. Shortly after an interview some years ago with the venerable Sarah Robertson, widow of Henry Robertson, we wrote these words:

"Man has been strangely moulded by this thing named 'conscience.' It has driven him in winter through the stormy seas to a bleak and barren wilderness, and yet, thereby hangs the tale of the founding of a new empire. Years before the Rebellion broke, there were men in Virginia who despised human slavery. They left the plantation for the free and fearless West and there formed a deathless attachment for the principles of abolition. One of these men was John Robertson, who now lies buried in Parish Grove. Born in the year 1781, and only five years after the Declaration of Independence, he followed the tracks of Boone into the State of Kentucky, and left behind him forever the Old Dominion. In the peace that followed the fall of the Prophet wondrous tales came to his ears of the opportunities of the North. He was now past fifty years of age, had strong and sturdy sons at his side who

partook of his ideas of liberty, and the great Northwest opened up a vast domain dedicated forever to the ways of freedom. With the bold and brave, to think is to act. He sold his possessions in the State of Kentucky and sent his sons, Henry and Samuel, to find a pathway through the wilderness."

The admixture of freedom-loving people who flocked to the Northwest to partake of the air of liberty and to raise their children under the blessings of free institutions, has constituted a monument more enduring than any bronze or marble to the wisdom and foresight of the Virginia statesmen. The men and women of English, Scotch, German and Irish blood who flocked to our borders were never to experience the terrible and benumbing curse of human slavery—raised their children in an atmosphere of free labor and free schools—and have therefore ever been most ardent and patriotic supporters of the government under which they have lived. The admixture of so many bloods and people also brought about another beneficial result. The people of the Northwest lost much of the narrow provincialism of their ancestors and became more truly cosmopolitan, hence national, in their views. Take for instance, the population of Oak Grove, the oldest township in the county in point of settlement. In 1883, forty-three years after the organization of the county, we gather from the short biographies of 88 of her citizens, that 28 of them were

natives of Ohio, 27 of Indiana, 7 of Virginia, 6 of Pennsylvania, 2 of Maryland, 1 of Tennessee, 1 of Maine, 1 of New York, 1 of South Carolina, 2 of Canada, while 12 had been born across the seas. Of the foreign born, 6 were English, 4 German, and 2 Irish. This is typical of the population of the entire county.

The influence of local environment must be considered. In the days before the Civil War great revivals of the Methodists were held at Parish Grove. Men and women rode to the meeting place on horseback, often mounting their children behind them. Great and earnest souls attended these gatherings and amid the inspiring scenes of the wilderness the tide of devotion rolled high.

One bright morning in June an eloquent orator by the name of MacMullen addressed a multitude assembled on a hillside west of the Grove. As far as the range of vision extended the waving grass was filled with the blossoms of the sweet william, and the gentle zephirs of the morning wafted the fragrance far and near. MacMullen became inspired and pointing to the flowering plains and the beautiful grove, declared that they alone were proof enough of the greatness and the goodness of the Creator; that God himself was present in this His glorious creation, and that His great hand had moulded the woodlands and the prairies for the habitations of peace.

"My brothers, these boundless prairies were dedicated to the ways of freedom. Amid such surroundings there can be no slaves; there can be no masters. If that our forefathers wrote with fearless pen that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude should ever exist here, they obeyed but the voice and heeded but the behest of Almighty God. We stand today by the graves of the redmen. Savage though they were; roaming these plains in all the wild abandon of their naked, out-door existence, they loved the open air and the unrestrained freedom of woodland and prairies. Warrior and sachem have passed away. A stronger and a sturdier race have seized their heritage. The day fast approaches when all these plains will be filled with the homes, and buzz with the industry of a new people. Still, the council fires of liberty, kindled from of old, shall yet burn on. Strong men will abide here, who will hate oppression, and despise tyranny. And their sons, with the sunlight of the prairies and the sunlight of freedom shining in their faces, will shoulder the musket and buckle on the sword to put down forever the curse of slavery."

The language was prophetic. A few years afterward and the Great Rebellion came on, and from the prairies of Benton many a boy went to the front to die for the Union. At a Decoration Day service in the Town of Boswell, some years ago, we heard the roll-call of the nation's dead, and on the list was the name of many a boy eighteen or nineteen years of age, who was

brought back from the battlefields of the South to rest in his native soil.

MacMullen himself, took a leading part in the organization of the 40th Indiana Regiment of Volunteer Infantry, and was one of Governor Morton's most trusted lieutenants in the dark and stormy days of the war.

CHAPTER III.

Political Divisions, Population, Productions

HENRY L. ELLSWORTH.

BENTON County is situated in the northwestern part of the state of Indiana, and is bounded on the north by Newton and Jasper counties; on the east by White and Tippecanoe, and the south by Warren, and on the west by the state of Illinois. Fowler, the county seat, is located at the geographical center of the county, is 28 miles north and west of the city of Lafayette by rail, and about 98 miles south and east of the city of Chicago. From east to west the county measures 23 miles—from north to south 18 miles. Starting at the east line there are three tiers of sections in range 6 west, all of ranges 7, 8, and 9, and 2 miles in range 10. From south to north the county embraces the congressional townships 24, 25 and 26. There are 408 square miles of territory in the entire area.

Benton is divided into eleven political divisions or Townships, Gilboa, Union, Richland, York, Parish Grove, Center, Pine, Bolivar, Oak Grove,

Grant and Hickory Grove. The largest township is Center, embracing 54 square miles, and in which is located the county seat—the smallest township is York, which only embraces about 30 square miles. Oak Grove and Parish Grove Townships derive their names from the excellent groves and woodlands within their limits. Pine takes its name from the principal stream of the county, Pine Creek. "Bolivar was named in honor of Bolivar Finch, who had received the name of the great South American liberator, Simon Bolivar. York was named in honor of New York, the native state of John Fleming, who was a leading pioneer of York, and was chosen trustee at the first township election. Union was so named 'because there was but one man in it who was not willing to give up all for the preservation of the Union.' Gilboa was named in honor of its picturesque mound, and Grant received the name of the great general who was elected President about a month before the township was formed. Richland's name refers to its fertile soil, Hickory Grove's to a grove of that name, and Center's name refers to its location in the county."

The population of Benton County in the year 1850, ten years after its organization, was only 1,144—in 1860, it was 2,809—in 1870, it was 5,615—in 1880, it was 11,108—in 1890, it was 11,903, and in 1900 it was 13,123. Since that time the population has been on the decrease. In 1910 the number was only 12,688, and in 1920 it was 12,206. Among the reasons that may be

assigned for this decrease, is the steady falling off of large families, and the restless spirit of the age which has caused many of our young men and women to go to the cities.

Owing to the fact that Benton County is wholly agricultural, without having what might be called a single factory in it, and also owing to the fact that it has always had within its limits large landed proprietors who have adopted a leasing system whereby whole sections and half-sections of land have been rented to a single tenant, (the heirs of Moses Fowler owning 12 or 15 sections of land south, west and south-west of Fowler at the present day), the growth of population has from the beginning of the county's history been greatly retarded. Take, for instance, these figures. The U. S. Census for the year 1920 shows a total of 253,194 acres in farm lands, but out of all this acreage there are only 1255 farms, making the average per farm, 201.7 acres. Only one county in the state shows a greater acreage, and that is Newton—her average being 224 acres to the farm. In Benton County in 1920, there were 440 farms of from 100 to 174 acres each—302 farms of from 175 to 259 acres each—257 farms of from 260 to 499 acres each—29 farms from 500 to 999 acres each, and 2 farms of over 1000 acres each. At present, therefore, and as a result of all these conditions, the number of inhabitants to the square mile is only about 30—only 5 counties, Brown, Jasper, Newton, Pulaski and Warren, being below that number. With a

soil of matchless fertility and a favorable climate, we could easily support a population of ten times that number, and comfortably feed, clothe and provide for every man, woman and child. If the day ever comes in Benton County when the tenant system may be dispensed with and the farm lands divided into freeholds of 40 to 80 acres each, the whole community will at once advance, both in population and material wealth.

But notwithstanding this great paucity in numbers, the composition of our citizenship is of the highest order. The old English, Scotch, German and Irish bloods still predominate as from the beginning, and elevate the character of our people to a high standard of industry, intelligence and morality. In 1920, out of a total of 12,206 people, 11,750 were native white, and only 412 were foreign born. This makes a percentage of native whites of 96.3. The total number of negroes in the county was only 44, or four tenths of one per cent. of the population. This colored citizenship is wholly confined to the town of Fowler. But beyond all else, we ought to be proud of the fact that out of a total of 9,572 persons over ten years of age, only 106, or only one and one-tenth (1.1) per cent. of the entire number, are illiterate. Thus has a system of free schools, properly encouraged, dispelled the clouds of darkness and ignorance. The day is almost at hand when not a single citizen of the county will be unable to read and write the American language.

The population of the various political divisions of the county in 1920 was as follows:

Bolivar Township, including Otterbein	1,374
Center Township, Including Fowler	2,529
Gilboa Township	705
Grant Township, including Boswell	1,424
Hickory Grove Township, including Ambia	1,109
Oak Grove Township, including Oxford	1,522
Parish Grove Township	880
Pine Township	513
Richland Township, Including Earl Park	952
Union Township	688
York Township	510

The population of the incorporated towns of Benton County, separately considered, was in 1920 as follows:

Fowler	1,442
Oxford	950
Boswell	880
Otterbein	702
Earl Park	542
Ambia	459

With the above sparse population, but with a productive soil, and with 253,194 out of a total of 261,120 acres, under high cultivation, we are of course an exporting county, the amount of grains and cereals annually produced being enormous. The leading staples are, corn, oats and wheat. In 1920, Benton County raised 4,204,090 bushels of corn, or over 344 bushels for every

man, woman and child within her borders—2,998,880 bushels of oats, or over 245 bushels for every inhabitant—181,631 bushels of wheat, or about 15 bushels for each inhabitant. The total value of all her crops was estimated by the government at $9,331,536, and the value of her cereals alone at $8,916,557. Hundreds of trucks and wagons convey these productions over the best of roads to easily accessible markets, and some 18 or 19 grain elevators ship them away to Chicago and other large centers. Such progress have we made since the day when the lowly Potawatomi squaw raised a few ears of Indian maize on the margins of Parish and White Oak Groves.

REFERENCES.

U. S. Census for the year 1920.

Progress of Education in Benton County, by L. A. McKnight. Fowler Public Library.

HENRY L. ELLSWORTH.

In speaking of the large land proprietors of Benton County, we think this an appropriate place to pen a brief sketch of one of the men who first directed the attention of eastern investors and land speculators to the beauty, richness and productiveness of the Wabash valley—who was one of the first to hold forth that the great prairies of the west were destined to become the future granaries of the nation—who, as the first United States Commissioner of Patents from 1836 to 1845, spent a large portion of his time in the in-

vestigation and development of better seeds and crops, of new and better implements of husbandry for the western farmers, of improved and superior methods of stock-raising and grazing, and who in recent years has been aptly denominated as the "father" of the present U. S. Department of Agriculture. We speak of Henry Leavitt Ellsworth, who at one time owned the lands on which the present town of Fowler is now located, and who was one of the two men who originally dedicated the site for the new county seat at Oxford, in the year 1843. It is altogether fitting and proper that the history of this man, who probably introduced the first mowing machine that was ever used on the prairies of Benton County, or within the limits of the State of Indiana, should be so closely identified with one of the banner agricultural communities of the state. Here were his prophecies most splendidly fulfilled.

Henry Leavitt Ellsworth was born at Windsor, Connecticut, on November 10th, 1791, and was a son of the Honorable Oliver Ellsworth, a conspicuous figure in the formation of the Federal Constitution. His mother was Abigail Wolcott, and his twin brother was the Honorable William Wolcott Ellsworth, Governor of Connecticut. Henry Leavitt was graduated from Yale College in the year 1810. He studied law under Judge Gould, of Litchfield, and later practiced at Windsor, but abandoned his early profession for what he considered as the more active pursuits of commerce and agriculture. The scene of his activities now

shifted to the City of Hartford, where he assisted materially in the upbuilding of many important business blocks and fine structures, and where he was duly elected as mayor on April 27, 1835.

Let us now turn to other scenes. From the years 1835 to 1840, the eyes of hundreds of young men in the east, who were eager to pursue the paths of fortune, were turned to the great West. The sudden and phenomenal development of the new states beyond the Alleghenies following the Black Hawk War, and the opening up of the great prairies north and west of the Wabash and from thence to the Mississippi, constitute a distinct epoch in our national life. Chicago had been placed on the map in 1833, and thousands of emigrants were crossing the mountains in covered wagons, or passing by way of the Ohio or the Great Lakes into the regions beyond.

Among the enchanting scenes presented to the eye of the traveler was the beautiful valley of the Wabash. Here had the Shawnee Prophet dwelt and boastingly declared that he could cause to spring from the ground pumpkins as large as a cabin, and single ears of corn that would feed a dozen men. Nor was this declaration wholly in vain. The red man was an excellent judge of land, and the fertile bottoms and salubrious climate of the great valley were promising of abundance. At the head of navigation on this stream was located the rising young town of Lafayette, named for the French patriot, and in

1838 a burg of three thousand souls. In high water steam-boats stood at its wharves unloading sugar and molasses, clothing and provisions, cigars, tobaccos and liquors, from the ports of the Ohio and the Mississippi, or being freighted with pork, hay, wheat and corn for the markets of Memphis and the city of New Orleans. Looking down from the slopes and bluffs of the winding river, were forests of oak, hickory, sugar and walnut, while farther out on the great plains stretched the prairies of the Wea, the Wild Cat and the Shawnee. Ten or twelve miles to the west opened up the Grand Prairie of the Illinois passing on in unbroken grandeur to the Father of Waters. The soil of this prairie was from two and a half to ten feet in depth, mostly underlaid with a clay sub-soil—it was capable of producing forty bushels of wheat and seventy-five bushels of corn to the acre. Over it the buffalo had roamed for thousands of years feeding on its upland grasses and rolling himself in its muddy wallows. Touch this plain with the plough—open up a ready market for its produce—and the promise of Eden was but an inglorious shadow.

The brain of Ellsworth clearly foresaw all this promise of the future. In 1832 he had been appointed by President Andrew Jackson as chief commissioner to the Indian tribes south and west of Arkansas and had made various journeys toward the Rocky Mountains, on one of which he was accompanied by Washington Irving, who there accumulated material for his "Tour on the

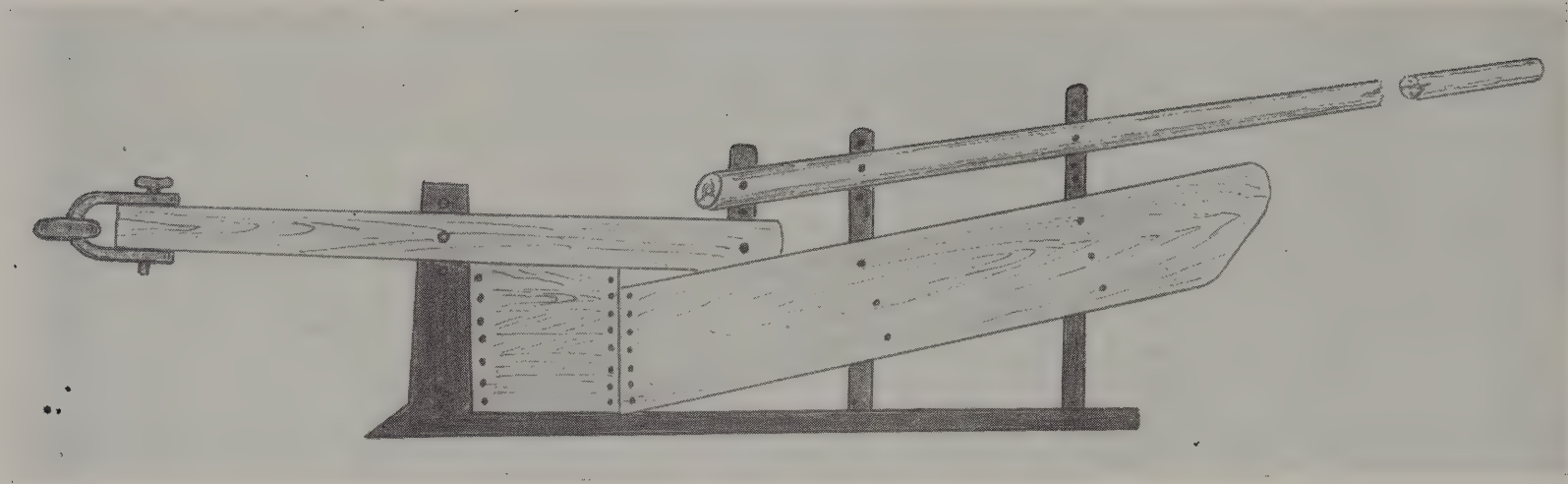
Prairies." Unlike many of his eastern contemporaries he was a firm believer in the advancement and growth of the western states and territories, and when his son, Henry W. Ellsworth, had graduated from Yale in the year 1834, at the age of twenty, he sent him in the following year to the growing town of Lafayette, there to try his fortunes with the western people. The Erie canal had already been completed, joining the markets of New York City with the inland lakes. It was now proposed to join the waters of Lake Erie with the valley of the Wabash, by the construction of the Wabash and Erie canal extending from Maumee Bay to the head of the river navigation at the town of Lafayette. From thence a railroad was to be projected to the coal fields at Danville, Illinois, and from thence on to St. Louis. The prospect was engaging. For if a ready outlet might be afforded for the thousands of hogs that roamed the woods, for the thousands of tons of hay, and bushels of corn, wheat and rye, that even in that day were produced along the great river and in its basin from ten to twenty miles on each side, new and prosperous towns would spring up along its banks, the prairies to the west would be opened up to grazing and cultivation, and an era of amazing agricultural development speedily inaugurated. The Wabash and Erie canal was no longer a dream, for Congress had made its first grant of land in aid of its construction in 1827, and in 1832 gangs of Irish laborers began to heave the dirt.

In 1836, Ellsworth was advanced to the post of first United States Commissioner of Patents at Washington, and he now began that wonderful series of investigations which he made of farm lands in the west, of their mode of cultivation and betterment, of stock-raising and pasturing, of cereals and plants adapted to the soil, of plans for constructing prairie cottages, for ditching, fencing and planting trees on the prairies, and for the introduction of the various new ploughs, mowing and reaping machines, and other appliances then being patented through the government offices. At the same time he was, through the agency of his son, keeping in touch with the situation on the Wabash, buying up land warrants and entering new lands.

The range of his inquiries concerning conditions in the west was truly remarkable. He numbered among his correspondents, senators of the United States, inventors of all kinds of farm implements, tillers of the soil, stockmen and grazers, expert seed growers, and projectors of railroads and canals. He wrote to Judge John R. Porter of Eugene, in Vermilion county, about the production of "Baden" and "Dutton" corn and Italian spring wheat—about introducing new mowing machines to cut wheat and grass—to Captain James Newell of Warren county about the best methods of breaking the sod and improving the prairie lands—about the sowing of blue grass and the feeding of cattle thereon—about the coal fields at Danville, and the comparative expense

of rail fencing and ditching—to Senator O. H. Smith of Indiana, about the possibilities of non-residents improving their lands—about the comparative profits of raising cattle, hogs and horses, and especially as to the best method of fattening swine. At the same time he was inaugurating through the Patent Office at Washington, a system of collecting and distributing new seeds and cereals among the farmers of the west. During all this time he earnestly recommended the upbuilding and encouragement of agriculture, as the basic industry of the Republic.

From the first, Henry L. Ellsworth was a believer in the superior quality of the prairie lands, holding that they were more fertile, could be more cheaply and readily improved, and that they were especially adapted to the building up of good homes. These were bold ideas to advance in an age when men dreaded the open plains and kept close to wood and running water, but his opinions were fully justified with the passing of the years. Writing in January, 1837, Ellsworth says: "I am sure there has been a common error to pass the rich prairie because timber could not be found adjoining at government price. Under this belief, many settlers have, to their sorrow entered the timber and left the prairie, because they supposed nobody would enter that without possessing the timber. This prairie has been lately entered. And such is the facility of raising timber on prairies by sowing the seed of black walnut and locust, that the desire for timber land has diminished.



PRAIRIE DITCHING PLOW

This was a primitive and massive tool that was brought in by George McAlister in 1875 *or* 1876, *and was used to cut channels through stagnant ponds that soon drained, and converted a great deal of waste into productive land. The main frame-work was of iron and to the long beam, nearly* 8 *inches square, ten to twenty yoke of oxen were hitched. The depth at which the furrow was cut was regulated by the long pole handle and a series of holes in the iron connection, giving the flexibility of changing the clevis, used in walking plows of those days, as well as guiding it straight—The short stout mouldboard was supplemented by long hinged planks which threw the surplus dirt away from the ditch proper, and these were adjustable to the conditions under which the plow was working.*

Those who doubt the comparative value of prairie and timber lands, will do well to consider that $12.00 is a fair price for clearing timber land. Timber land, when cleared in the usual manner, is left encumbered with stumps and roots, fatal obstacles to labor-saving machines. $12,000 will be required to clear 1,000 acres of timber land; whereas, the 1,000 acres of prairie can be put into tame grass without plowing. A prairie farm may be put in complete cultivation at from $3.75 to $9.00 per acre, according to the computations of my son Edward, who has been extensively engaged in cultivating the prairies for the last year."

That Ellsworth introduced the first mowing machine used on the prairies adjoining Lafayette and in what is now Benton County, and that these were the first mowing machines ever used in the state of Indiana, or in the West, is beyond all question. The raising of timothy and other tame grasses was then a very profitable employment. The southern states being adapted to the culture of cotton and not having a climate favorable to the growth of grasses, depended for their supply of hay upon the northern and middle states. Ellsworth in 1837 estimates the yield of hay at from one and a half to two tons per acre—the cost of cutting and pressing without labor-saving machines at $2.00 per ton—the average price per ton at New Orleans at $30.00—the cost of floating down hay on flat-boats to that city, at $8.00 per ton. Hence, in a favorable season, the profits

were enormous. If now, some labor-saving device, drawn by horsepower and cutting from ten to fifteen acres of hay per day, could be introduced, the cost of production would be greatly decreased and the profits of agriculture materially advanced.

It is certain that as early as 1837 or 1838 Ellsworth was giving considerable attention to an invention of one Obed Hussey, of Cambridge, Maryland—that in June of 1838, he was solicited by Judge John R. Porter of Eugene, to introduce mowing and grain-cutting machines into the Wabash Valley—sending two to Lafayette and one to Vermilion County—that in a letter to his son in September, 1838, he speaks of having forwarded some machines to the town of Lafayette. The first inventions were very crude, and the first experiments may not have resulted successfully, but in 1851 he speaks in a letter to Mr. Charles De Selding, of using mowing machines in the cutting of good prairie hay that yielded one and one-half tons to the acre. In August, 1852, he was exhibiting to the Agricultural Society of Tippecanoe County at the old court house at Lafayette, a new horse-power mowing machine which was attracting considerable attention among the farmers, and which he was then undoubtedly using on the prairies of Benton County.

The story of the actual opening up of the Wabash and Erie canal—thus connecting the great valley of northern Indiana with Maumee Bay, Lake Erie, and the markets of the East—has never been fully told, nor will we attempt at

this time but a brief account of that vast enterprise, reserving for a later chapter a more detailed relation. Suffice it to say that the first shovel of earth was thrown out on the 22nd day of February, 1832, at Fort Wayne, and was made the occasion for a fitting celebration. The selection of Washington's birthday was most appropriate, for long before the father of his country had foreseen the immense advantage of linking up the waterways of the west by a well arranged system of inland canals, and in the century before he had made known his views through a written communication to the House of Burgesses of Virginia. Considering the times, the lack of funds and the difficulties of excavation, the work proceeded with a fair degree of speed. The first division of thirty-two miles was completed in 1836, and on the 4th of July of that year, the first canal-boat, the "Indiana", passed through Huntington. Wabash and Peru were reached in 1837, Logansport in 1838, Tippecanoe river in 1841 and Lafayette in 1843.

The whole valley now sprang into life as if touched by the magician's wand. "As it (the canal) crawled westward successive towns along the route hailed its arrival with jubilant demonstrations, and other towns sprang up in anticipation of its benefits. It brought into the valley a new life and energy. The abundant agricultural wealth of the Wabash country now found comparatively cheap and easy transportation to the East; the regions north and south for a distance

of fifty to one hundred miles gravitated to this outlet, and from the Illinois country westward to Lafayette came flocking the great prairie schooners laden with their contribution to the world's marts. Westward, in turn, came the capacious freight boats laden with merchandise of all kinds, and the packets with emigrants, who now having access to this land of promise, came in an uninterrupted stream, adding to the new currents of life." Lafayette now laid the foundations for that material prosperity and wealth which have continued to the present day, and the wharves of both river and canal were laden with goods. A pioneer of that time counted four hundred wagons unloading in a single day in the year 1844.

Ellsworth, as we have said, had been keeping in close communication with these momentous events. In 1835 and 1836, and in anticipation of the construction of an extensive network of internal improvements all over the West, he had, for himself, and as the agent for certain capitalists at Hartford and elsewhere, "swept whole townships at a purchase," situate in Tippecanoe, Fountain, Warren, White, Benton and Jasper Counties in Indiana, and he had also acquired large tracts in the states of Illinois, Michigan, Iowa and Wisconsin. Hard times had followed and the original outlay and the load of taxes had kept the investors poor. But now in 1845, Ellsworth's long and useful career in the Patent Office ended, better times were at hand, and he at once

hastened to Lafayette to take up his residence and to become at length the largest land baron of the western world.

The fund of information which he had acquired through his correspondence, his knowledge of seeds and grains and their adaptability to the soil, the wide range of his experiments in farm machinery, the influence of his former honorable position in the government, and his extensive holdings in real estate, at once made him a commanding figure in the new country. In the month of June, 1852, we find him acting as the first president of the newly organized Agricultural Society of Tippecanoe County, proudly declaring that "he deemed the election and position more honorable than a seat in Congress or the Gubernatorial chair, and that he should take the highest pleasure in doing all in his power to advance the interests of agriculture—the basis of our wealth and prosperity."

Ellsworth's first land entries in Benton County were made on the 16th of March, 1836, when he entered lands in section 31, 32 and 33, in township 24 North, of Range 6 west, being south and west of the present town of Otterbein. The Grand Prairie, however, and its splendid possibilities, were ever before him, and from the year 1840 to the year 1851, he entered approximately 65,000 acres in Benton as follows: 4,636 acres in township 24, Range 6; 4,020 acres in township 26, Range 6; 4,800 acres in township 24, Range 7; 9,700 acres in township 25, Range 7; 4,302 acres

in township 26, Range 7; 1280 acres in township 24, Range 8; 4,000 acres in township 25, Range 8; 6,320 acres in township 26, Range 8; 11,200 acres in township 24, Range 9; 8,600 acres in township 25, Range 9; and 5,940 acres in township 26, Range 9. Among these entries were some of the choicest selections of rolling prairie in the whole West. The engineer, who with chain and compass afterwards located all these entries, was Henry Robertson, the organizing sheriff of Benton County. He traversed the plains on horseback with his instruments slung over his shoulder, and the old tripod on which his glass and compass were mounted is now in the Babcock Museum at Goodland, Indiana.

The lure of the great savannas now fully entered Ellsworth's soul. To one who has stood upon the crest of Blue Ridge and viewed the plains stretching away to the Illinois, or who, riding to the top of that long swell that runs south of the present town of Fowler, has looked upon the beautiful valley beyond, all this is conceivable. He now entered upon the grand project that twenty-five years later Moses Fowler and his ansociates were fully to achieve. He would feed and graze these boundless prairies, fence and drain them, and finally subjugate them to the plow. With the sturdy pioneers who had settled on the banks of Pine Creek or in Oak and Parish groves, he was in hearty accord. If now, the wealth and capital of the east could be enlisted in all this development, an enterprising race of farm-

ers introduced into the open plains, the wolf and rattlesnake would soon disappear and the dawn of civilization be at hand. Numerous great obstacles, however, were to be overcome, and to the solution of these difficulties Ellsworth now devoted his whole time and attention. All kinds of farm machinery were but crudely developed, the wet prairies and swamps were at times almost inaccessible, and how to get the hay, cattle and other products of the plains to the markets at Lafayette, was a serious problem. In the early '70's Adams Earl and Moses Fowler reached the final solution by the construction of a steam railroad, but in Ellsworth's time that day had not yet arrived.

We are dealing now with a prescient mind that opened the way. Of the leviathans that now plow the deep and ride triumphant through hurricanes and billows, Columbus knew nothing, but he was the first to dream the dream, and to point the passage to a new world. Ill-health and old age came on—the shadows of the coming rebellion fell across Ellsworth's path—but the prodigious efforts that he put forth before the darkness came are worthy of note. Early in the 50's we find him introducing the culture of flax to rot the stubborn turf and to produce fibre—testing from 15 to 17 different patterns of newly invented plows to break the prairie sod—exhibiting and using new mowing machines to cut the prairie hay—building 27 miles of new plank fence to enclose the prairies, confine his herds, and fit the prairies for the growth of blue grass, using 6,000 feet of lum-

ber to the mile—cutting 1½ tons of hay per acre on the prairies about Otterbein and hauling it to the Wabash—his foreman, White Anderson, feeding large herds of cattle on what are now the Heath lands south-east of Oxford, and wintering them on the stalks and grass along the Wabash bottoms—and last, but not least, constructing a plank road westward from Chauncey or West Lafayette to the vicinity of what is now Montmorenci and Otterbein, over which to convey his farm and fencing materials, his hay, cattle, and other products. At the same time he was encouraging the smaller farmer to put forth every possible effort to tame the wild grass lands, was helping to build up the new county seat at Oxford, and declared in a speech at that place in 1852, that the day would yet come when the prairies would be plowed by steam, and a quarter of beef find its way from the capital of Benton to the marts of Liverpool. His old plank road is well remembered by George H. Jennings, who recounts that when a boy he helped to haul hay and drive cattle over its courses, and who also calls to mind the fencing by Ellsworth of what is now known as the "mound farm" in Bolivar Township.

Another great service that Ellsworth rendered to Lafayette and to the vast open districts to the west was to call attention by the circulation of thousands of printed letters in the East, to the richness and productiveness of the prairie soils, maintaining without successful contradiction that they presented one of the best opportunities for

the investment of money and quick returns thereon, then afforded to the investor. These representations were made in a spirit of absolute fidelity and honesty, and many a man was led to profit by his western ventures. The rumor of these fertile regions quickly spread, and thousands of actual settlers came over the Wabash and Erie canal, or drove through in canvas-topped wagons, to avail themselves of the favorable conditions and to establish permanent homes. Mr. Robert A. Swan, now county treasurer of Benton County, in a recent search among his abstract records, unearthed for our use one of these Ellsworth circulars, and its contents are so interesting that we have printed the same below in full.

Too often the pages of history are filled with accounts of the acts and doings of politicians and so-called statesmen, who seldom, if at all, have added to the sum of the nation's glory and progress, while scant mention is made of those quiet and unassuming characters, who by constant research, investigation and industry, have helped to lay the sure foundations of the Republic. Henry L. Ellsworth is deserving of a place in the annals of his country's history.

Owing to ill-health, Mr. Ellsworth in the year 1857, returned to his native state of Connecticut, and he died at Fairhaven on the 27th day of December, 1858. He was thrice married, his first wife being Nancy Allen Goodrich, by whom he had three children, Edward A., who died about the year 1838, Annie, and Henry W.

Henry W. Ellsworth, who came to Lafayette in the year 1835, was the author of a small volume entitled, "Valley of the Upper Wabash," which on account of its relation of conditions in the Wabash Valley, in the year 1838, is now of considerable historical value in this state.

Annie Ellsworth, the daughter, and who afterwards intermarried with Roswell C. Smith, was the young lady who sent the first message, "What Hath God Wrought?" over the electric telegraph of Professor Samuel F. B. Morse, who was a friend and classmate of her father.

AN INTERESTING LETTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.
LIBRARY.

Office of the Librarian.
Washington, D. C., April 1, 1925.

Mr. Elmore Barce,
Fowler, Indiana.

Dear Mr. Barce:—

Through Miss Esther U. McNitt, Librarian of the Department of Indiana History and Archives at the Indianapolis State Library, I have learned that you have recently been looking up material on Honorable Henry Leavitt Ellsworth. Possibly Miss McNitt explained to you that I have for some time been collecting information in regard to him. My interest in him is due to the fact

that he is considered the "father" of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. After he left the Department in 1845, he moved to Lafayette, Indiana, as you probably know, to take charge of his large landed interests. I have, however, been able to find very little information in regard to the years which he spent in Indiana. I have seen him referred to as the largest land owner in the West at that time. It is also stated that he used the first mowing machine ever introduced upon the prairies. In looking over a history of Tippecanoe County, I noticed that he was the first President of the Agricultural Society of the county in 1852. Mr. Edward A. Ellsworth, former bursar of Purdue University, was his grandson. He also had a granddaughter, Mrs. Thos. A. Stuart, who lived in Lafayette. * * * * *

If there is any particular point which you are desirous of knowing in regard to Mr. Ellsworth's early life or his activities in the Department, I may possibly be able to help you, although the information which I have is not very extensive.

Very truly yours,
Claribel R. Barnett,
Librarian.

crb/s

AN ELLSWORTH CIRCULAR.

Lafayette, Indiana, February, 1852.

Dear Sir:—

Since I left the Patent Office, I have devoted my attention to Agricultural pursuits, in the

Wabash Valley; and find expectations more than realized.

I wish now to propose to yourself and confidential friends, a very advantageous investment, where the gain must be great, and the risk nothing.

There is, near here, some most excellent land, belonging to the United States, subject to entry. These lands are daily taken up by emigrants, at $1.25 per acre; I can obtain them for you at 62½ cents. You may ask, how can this be done? I answer: by purchasing Soldiers' Warrants, allowing the Warrantee, or his assigns, to enter 160 acres in a single body, not of necessity in a square form, but contiguous. The Warrants are issued by the Government, and equal to gold and silver. They can be bought at $100, which brings the land at half the minimum price in Gold and Silver.

I should be happy to advance our mutual interest, and therefore, offer to enter in your name, such a quantity of land as you wish to obtain; allowing you to hold the title till sale is made, which may be sooner or later, as you prefer; allowing you also to retain the capital; eight per cent interest and taxes (the land will be free from taxes, five years) and any other expense incurred by mutual consent, by your agreeing to pay me one-half the overplus.

You will perceive I have a strong motive to make the best selections, and take good care of the same.

If you wish to improve the land, I will unite with you in cultivation, which, if carried on under close inspection, is advisable. Let me here say, that I have one farm of 1000 acres, which cost me $1.25 per acre, some years since; now in cultivation, which brought me $4000 last year, and is now rented for $4 each acre, this year, in cash.

Four hundred dollars will purchase 640 acres (a section one mile square.) If you will furnish the means, which I can make available on sight drafts, or on time, I will secure the land. I believe I can sell the land within two years, at $4, and if suffered to lie without cultivation, it will, in five years, bring $5, which will be 700 per cent advance. When I sell I hope to obtain as much cash as the land cost. This may be refunded or re-invested, as you may prefer.

If my proposition fails to meet your favorable consideration, accept it as the assurance of my confidence in yourself.

I wish to add, that good land is becoming scarcer, and daily enhanced in value by railroads and plank roads; especially the latter. I am now engaged in constructing a plank road, into a beautiful prairie, which is ready for the plough, and will yield, without hoeing, fifty bushels of corn per acre. Immigrants are paying $1.25 in gold and silver for the same. Experiments show that I can fence, break, and erect a house on a section of 640 acres, and pay for all expenses, including the cost of the land, from the first crop.

The facts are these: Land estimated at 75 cents; breaking it, $1; fencing, 40 cents; average per acre for house 16 by 18 and painted, costing $110 on 640 acres, 16 cents; allowance for use of money to buy teams, ploughs, chains, &c., 25 cents; add for contingencies, 50 cents—this makes the whole expense, per acre, about $3—fencing costs $115 per mile—half this sum, when others join. I advise to fence the land—the prairie grass can then be cut with mowing machines, at 20 cents per acre, and will either sell or can be fed to stock. The expense of feeding cattle on the vacant prairie, is 10 cents per head per month—Land fenced will rent on shares.

When the land is once broken up—and contractors are ready to do it at $1 per acre; they keeping the team—a small boy drops corn in every third furrow; this is covered by the succeeding one, and grows to maturity without any culture, unobstructed by weeds, and yields, upon an average, thirty bushels. If the corn is not fed off by swine, the gathering and cribbing costs two and a half cents per bushel. Corn at Lafayette, is usually 25 cents. Let us call the value at the crib, 20 cents, less the gathering, 2½ cents; this price on 30 bushels, is $5.25; subsequently, this land will rent for 16 bushels of corn per acre, delivered in the crib, which, at 20 cents per bushel, is $3.20, the interest of $53. Thus, 1000 acres, costing $650, which, with improvements, all to be paid from first crop, will net $3,000; the interest

of $50,000! I have stocked the farms with young cattle, and gained four good profits, viz:

1st. Improvement of the land, since feeding brings in blue grass. 2d. Rise of land. 3d. Growth of cattle equal to 33 per cent. 4th. The benefit of crossing with superior breed. I do not hesitate to recommend grazing as the most expeditious and easiest mode of getting an income, where funds can be advanced to buy the stock. Few houses and a few agricultural implements, are needed on grazing farms. I buy young heifers in fall; winter them on blue grass, green rye, and a little fodder, and cross them with superior stock, and let the calves run with the cows. As cattle sell at any age, farming operations are easily closed up by the sales at home and abroad.

We expect soon to send our fat cattle to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, in four days by cars—distance 800 miles. Passengers will, after this year, go in forty-four hours. My plan of a house is simple, yet warm and dry. The outside and inside boarded up perpendicularly, with battens to cover joints; the intermediate space filled with straw and clay. The floors are laid with lining strips, and made tight with cement. No plastering. The roof composed of double clapboards; lower tier grooved on edges to let water pass, if it should get under top board. Stairs fold up between the joists. When painted, the house is handsome, and satisfactory to the tenants—a good paint is made of lime, tallow, burgundy pitch, and salt—all mixed while slacking

—A few wide boards nailed to the underside of the naked joists, affords cupboards as needed, to any extent.

Surely, with all these advantages, it requires little credulity to believe that the fine lands in the Wabash valley, must soon equal those in the Miami, Scioto, and Muskingum valleys, which sell from $30 to $50 per acre. Lands on the former are equally good, and the markets equally near.

The cheapest route, at present, is by Railroad to Dunkirk or Buffalo; Steamboat to Toledo—Canal to Lafayette.

Yours &c.

ANOTHER LETTER.

The letter below was written in connection with the sale of some lands now owned by John Gretter, of Richland Township, and on the fair plains just northwest of the present town of Earl Park.

Lafayette, Oct. 5, 1851.

Dear Sir:—

Yours of 25th ult. is rec'd. I am happy to say to you that I have it in my power to locate some Land Warrants of either kind you mentioned, to great advantage. I am now extending a plank road to benefit some of the choicest prairie land I ever saw. It is not generally known that the land is vacant. I am cutting on same kind of land now good prairie hay 1½ tons per acre with my mowing machines. I cultivate land with much profit

and buy cattle in February or March, feeding say two months then fattening the herd on the prairie grass. I am now sending a large drove very fat (without any grain) to Chicago to be slaughtered. The land I can enter will bring 50 bushels of corn without hoeing, simply plowing. I can sell 1000 acres of land for $30,000.00, but decline since the 1000 acres pay me the interest on $70,000.00 per annum, all these lands must soon raise to $15.00 or $20.00. This is indeed a rare chance to make money without any risk.

As I have selected the lands with much care and trouble and have farms close there, I prefer to be contingently interested in the profits. I will enter the lands in your name and suffer you to hold the title when perfected and deduct capital and 10% interest if you will suffer me to have one-half the profits over and above; I can do this with others if you decline. I have refused several because I did not like to confide in the men. I will say farther, I will buy the land at some fixed price if you prefer at the end of 2, 3, or 4 years. I will send you some circulars, which will interest you, I think.

Permit the kind remembrance to your family and assurance of best wishes for yourself.

Sincerely,
(Signed) H. L. Ellsworth.

Mr. Chas. DeSelding, W. City.

ANOTHER LETTER.

A communication from the office of the librarian of the United States Department of Agriculture, of date April 15th, 1925, encloses the following letter of Ellsworth's which shows that he had been making examinations of the land in the Wabash valley as early as the year 1835. The original of this letter is filed in the Yale University Library.

Washington City, Sept. 24, 1835.
(Private)

Dear Sir:

I write to mention that I shall start for Indiana on the 1st of October and go by way of New York, Buffalo and Maumee bay.

I am informed that there are some very excellent opportunities to invest money on and near the grand canal which is now making to connect the Wabash Valley with the Maumee bay at the west end of Lake Erie. I have this summer examined the whole of this country. The soil is very **rich** and **fertile** and as like causes must (other things being equal) produce like effects this land will probably rise to $20 or $30, and certainly to $10 within a few years. Such has been the result on the Ohio, Penn., and New York Canals. The land in Indiana is superior to that in either of the other states and when the canal is done there will be 3 great markets open for the produce, viz. **New Orleans** (via Wabash), **Montreal—New York.**

I made some purchases last June when there

and have been offered 100 per cent advance for three tracts since my return. This choice land can now be secured at $1.25 per acre and will in my opinion advance 100 per cent for 10, 15 and 20 years. Some excellent village lots can be bought low. I sold on Monday a lot in Cleveland (which I bought about ten years ago for $100) for $3300—$500 cash down and the remainder in 2, 4 and 6 years—equal to about $3000 cash.

Now if you wish to invest I will locate the land and take care of it free of commission—the deed to be taken from Govt. to yourself and you may deduct the capital and six per cent and divide with me the overplus, or if you prefer, agree to pay me all over the capital and 20 per cent. a year at the expiration of 5 years of any kind.

A draft on you at 4 months will be just as good as cash if I arrive there safe and find things as I expect.

In this matter there is no hazard or risk.

Yours respectfully,

Henry L. Ellsworth.

P. S. I stop at American Hotel, N. York.

S. F. Hitchcock, Esq.,

New Haven.

Confidential to yourself and friends.

H. L. E.

ANNIE ELLSWORTH

On the last day of the session of Congress ending on March 3rd, 1843, and after many trials and

difficulties, Prof. Samuel F. B. Morse, inventor of the electric telegraph, was granted an appropriation with which to construct an experimental line from Baltimore to Washington, D. C. The following is Prof. Morse's own account of the last trying hours of his struggle before the national legislature, and includes the interesting story concerning Annie Ellsworth:

"The last days of the last session of that Congress were about to close. A bill appropriating thirty thousand dollars for my purpose had passed the House, and was before the Senate for concurrence. On the last day of the session (3rd of March, 1843) I had spent the whole day and part of the evening in the Senate chamber, anxiously watching the progress of the passing of the various bills of which there were, on the morning of that day, over one hundred and forty to be acted upon before the one in which I was interested would be reached; and a resolution had a few days before been passed to proceed with the bills on the calendar in their regular order, forbidding any bill to be taken up out of its regular place.

"As evening approached there seemed to be but little chance that the Telegraph Bill would be reached before the adjournment, and consequently I had the prospect of the delay of another year, with the loss of time, and all my means already expended. In my anxiety I consulted with two of my senatorial friends—Samuel Huntington, of Connecticut, and Senator Wright, of New York —asking their opinion of the probability of reach-

ing the bill before the close of the session. Their answers were discouraging, and their advice was to prepare myself for disappointment. In this state of mind I retired to my chamber and made all arrangements for leaving Washington the next day. Painful as was this prospect of renewed disappointment, you, my dear sir, will understand me when I say that, knowing from experience whence my help must come in any difficulty, I soon disposed of my cares, and slept as quietly as a child.

"In the morning, as I had just gone into the breakfast room, the servant called me out, announcing that a young lady was in the parlor wishing to speak to me. I was at once greeted with the smiling face of my young friend, the daughter of my old and valued friend and classmate, the Honorable H. L. Ellsworth, the Commissioner of Patents.

"On my expressing surprise at so early a call, she said:—

"I have come to congratulate you."

"Indeed, for what?"

"On the passage of your bill."

"Oh! No, my young friend, you are mistaken; I was in the senate chamber till after the lamps were lighted, and my senatorial friend assured me there was no chance for me."

"But," she replied, "it is you that are mistaken. Father was there at the adjournment at mid-

night, and saw the President put his name to your bill, and I asked father if I might come and tell you, and he gave me leave. Am I the first to tell you?"

"The news was so unexpected that for some moments I could not speak. At length I replied:—

"Yes, Annie, you are the first to inform me, and now I am going to make you a promise; the first dispatch on the completed line from Washington to Baltimore shall be yours."

"Well," said she, "I shall hold you to your promise."

Later Morse writes:—

"That sentence of Annie Ellsworth's was divinely indited, for it is in my thoughts day and night. 'What hath God wrought?' It is His work, and He alone could have carried me thus far through all my trials and enabled me to triumph over the obstacles, physical and moral, which opposed me."

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CHAPTER IV.

Topography - Geology - Soil

GEORGE McALISTER—THE TILE INDUSTRY —SUGAR CREEK

THERE are certain parts of the Grand Prairie of the Illinois which present such an appearance of sameness and flatness, stretching away to the horizon for mile after mile, as to become positively dreary and monotonous. The high and undulating savannas of Benton County, swept by long crests and majestic swells, from which one may view the panorama of nature in the valleys below, are both inspiring and beautiful, and all sense of ennui is at once dispelled.

The drainage is perfect. The geologist has compared its surface to the form of a turtle's back from which the water flows in every direction. The north half of the north tier of townships drops away to the stream of the Iroquois—the north-east corner to the Tippecanoe—the east and south flow to the Wabash—the southwest to the Vermilion. Rising almost in the center of the county is Gravel Hill, 857 feet above sea level and 136 feet higher than the Union

depot at Indianapolis. This is the highest point of ground between Lafayette and Chicago and is known in railroad parlance as, "The Summit"—hence, the old Summit House at Fowler, a few miles below. Gravel Hill is at least forty feet higher than any other point in the county.

The most prominent of the great billows that rise above the level of the prairie is the Blue Ridge, commencing at Mount Gilboa, five miles south of the Jasper County line and three miles east of the White County line, and thence extending in a general westerly direction to the state of Illinois, crossing the west county line about three miles south of Newton County. All waters falling on the north slope of this watershed flow to the Iroquois, except in the eastern part of Gilboa township, where the Hollingsworth drain and its tributaries flow to the Tippecanoe. Carpenter Creek in West Gilboa flows north-east through Remington, thence to the Iroquois. The waters of North Union, North Richland and North York, all go to the Iroquois.

The southern slope of Blue Ridge is bordered by two streams, the largest in the county—Big Pine Creek and Sugar Creek. Sugar Creek rises in the east center of section 10-25-8, at what was formerly known as the "Ghost House," just north of the town of Fowler, flows to the north-east and cuts the highway about eighty rods west of the village of Lochiel; thence it turns to the north-west striking the foot of Blue Ridge in section 22-26-8, just west of Wadena; thence it flows at

the foot of Blue Ridge to a point about one mile north of the town of Earl Park; thence it flows south-west through the south half of York township, crossing the Illinois state line at a point about two and one-half miles north and two miles west of the village of Freeland Park. Its final outlet is at Watseka, Illinois, where it enters the Iroquois. Commencing in section 22-26-8, a prominent ridge extends along the south side of Sugar for a distance of approximately six miles, forming a watershed between the waters of Sugar Creek and the waters of Mud Creek to the south. From the top of this great undulation the whole valley, extending eight miles to the south, and west to the state of Illinois, is seen in the perspective. At the western terminus of this ridge is the beautiful town of Earl Park, whose groves and spires are visible for miles, and from whose southern edge may be seen the town of Fowler, nine miles to the south-east. The monument of Edward C. Sumner, is about three-quarters of a mile to the south-west, and the stone image at the top looks over the thirty-five thousand acres of fertile land to the south and west, formerly owned by the great cattle baron. The basin of Sugar Creek where it enters the valley between Blue Ridge and this high ridge to the south, is not over a mile wide at any one point—in places it is much narrower—but it is very picturesque.

Big Pine Creek rises on the western line of section 23-26-8, in Union, and flows to the east and south-east, laving the foot of Blue Ridge

to a point just south of Mount Gilboa, where it turns to the south and thence to the south-west, flowing through Pine and Bolivar Townships, and entering Warren County at the south line of section 33-24-7. The time is well remembered when there was a little lake or pond at the source of this stream where thousands of little shells lined the shores, and where thousands of plover and snipe formerly came to water. Big Pine was well known to the Jesuit Fathers, who loved its pleasant streams and walnut groves, long before any other white man had pierced this wilderness—it was drawn upon the map of Thomas Hutchins, Geographer to the King of England, before the United States of America gained its independence —it formed the ancient boundary line between the Kickapoos of the south and the Potawatomi of the northern prairies—its southern shores furnished the pines and evergreens that form the ever verdant groves north and west of the town of Oxford—it was the scene of the first white man's settlement ever made in Benton County. The charming woodlands of oak, hickory, walnut and pine that line its shores have won the admiration of mankind—red and white—for centuries past.

Blue Ridge has several famous vantage points along its crest. The first is Mount Gilboa at its eastern extremity, 815 feet above sea level. From here a beautiful plain falls away for a distance of about seven miles to the town of Remington, which is eighty feet lower in point of altitude.

At the southern foot of Gilboa ridge is the old cemetery established in 1851 and for years maintained by the United Brethren. The sires and scions of many of the first families of Pine Creek are buried here—a soldier or two of the War of 1812—many of the veterans of 1861 to 1865. From Mount Gilboa one may see the tower of the temple of justice at Fowler, twelve miles to the south-west—looking to the south the groves of Pine jutting out into the western prairies are lost on the distant horizon. One traveling over the old road leading from the Falls of the Iroquois (now Rensselaer) to Independence saw the giant form of Gilboa looming for miles over the prairie trails.

The second eminence on Blue Ridge is Mount Nebo in the north-west quarter of section 20-26-7, about two miles east of the village of Wadena. Mount Nebo is 795 feet above sea level, and at a depth of 82 feet below the surface, rests upon a stratum of soft sand-stone thirty-three feet six inches in depth—below this is blue limestone. This ancient seat was named by the late John W. Swan who came to Union Township as early as 1856. He was a man of some considerable ability, a ready writer and speaker, and a keen observer of men. He was often referred to as the "Sage of Mount Nebo." From the top of Nebo to the bed of Pine Creek on the south, there is a sudden descent of approximately one hundred feet in a mile and a half. South-east of Nebo in section 28-26-7, and near the former residence of John W.

Nutt, the man who named Union Township and who was its first trustee, is an outcropping of St. Louis limestone of a very fair quality. The abutments of the bridge just west of Bethany Chapel were formerly constructed of this rock.

The third and grandest point of observation along Blue Ridge is Vinegar Hill, situated in the extreme north-east corner of section 20-26-9, north-west of the town of Earl Park. In midsummer the landscape is remarkable. Ten miles to the south-east is the grove of the Indian Parish —an island of blue in a sea of yellow grain; to the west of this the headlands of Prairie Green extending to the plains of the Illinois. To the right lies Sugar Grove at the foot of Blue Ridge —and everywhere the fields of tasseling corn, the ripe harvest, and the wondrous bounty of nature. Standing on this summit seventy-five years ago, one might have seen the curling smoke of the campers' fires ascending from these groves in the evening, and the white tops of their wagons gleaming on the prairies in the day-time—now 'tis a vast panorama of fields and farms, schools and homes. This is the ripening and the glorious fulfillment of the dream of the past.

About one mile north of Fowler and a half mile west, begins a ridge that extends almost due west for a distance of two and one-half miles, ending on the west line of Center Township, where a commanding view is obtained of the rich and rolling prairies of Parish Grove. The long line of hills at the western end of this ridge may be seen

for miles, and are by far the most striking figures in the great central plain of the county.

Midway of the county north and south and on the western bank of Big Pine, a third high undulation begins, which extends south and west to the Illinois line, crossing at a point about seven miles north of Warren County. From the top of this ridge and throughout its whole length one sees to the south the splendid valley of the Lake Erie, from the town of Templeton at the east to the town of Ambia at the west. The view from the top of the crest one mile south of Fowler and on State Highway No. 10, is particularly inspiring. Nine miles to the south and east lies White Oak Grove—to the south the pleasant woodlands that mark the winding course of Mud Pine—nine miles to the south-west is the town of Boswell, while on the extreme right one beholds the blue outline of Parish Grove. The long line of stone highway dipping into the valley below—the fine farm lands checkered with fields of grain —the miniature groves that everywhere mark the homes of the prosperous citizens, form in truth a pleasing picture.

The first prominent land mark on this ridge is the remnant of Silver Leaf Grove on the state highway south of Fowler. One may see this small cluster of trees from the Warren County line nine miles to the south, and when the air is clear, it may be distinctly observed from the Williamsport road south of Boswell. This grove was planted about 1872 or 1873 by Jerry Simpson,

foreman for Moses Fowler. The young trees were hauled from the city of Lafayette and formerly covered about twenty acres of ground. In 1883 the trees had attained a considerable growth and extended along the public highway for a half mile or more. In that same year a soldiers' reunion was held at this grove which attracted thousands. A sham battle occurred between the Union and Confederate forces in which gallant charges were made and repulsed, cannon discharged with a mighty roar, and many a man in mimicry bit the dust. The days of the old veterans of 1861 are fast passing away, but the memory of youth still clings to these fond recollections.

But the great and outstanding point of interest along this ridge is the grove of the Indian Parish, in section 35 and 36-25-9, three miles north of the town of Boswell. We hasten to give the exact location of this marvelous work of nature, in fear and dread lest the next few decades may witness its entire destruction. One entering this grove in 1850 found himself in a primeval forest. On every hand were trees of majestic heights and proportions. Here appeared the bur-oak, elm, hickory and the sugar tree—above all the massive and towering trunks of the black walnut. Penetrating further, masses of underbrush and tangled vines often barred the way. The traveler was now entering the favorite haunts of the wild turkey and the partridge, which in the old Indian days had been numerous. In places the under-

brush and the vines had been trampled down by the foot of the deer. The most surprising fact, however, was the sudden change in the contour of the ground. The surface was no longer regular like the surrounding prairie, but broken in places by sharp undulations and deep ravines. Nature stood forth here as wild and grand as from the beginning, presenting on the one hand, woody glens and grottoes, scarcely touched at noontide by the rays of the sun, and on the other, ascending slopes crowned with the tall colonnades of sylvan giants, from whose tops the whole panorama of the prairie extended in the perspective.

As late as 1885, a state geologist entering this grove recorded the following; "Here, upon a high ridge seven miles from any other timber, grew 700 acres of forest trees of gigantic size, and dense in their midst as are the forests of Africa. Linden trees, of immense size, bur-oaks, five or six feet in diameter, stately hackberries, monstrous elms and gigantic walnuts, that grew to be seven and one-half feet in diameter, and measured four feet across, seventy feet from the ground. One giant among them measured seven feet three inches across the stump, and gave ninety feet of its immense length to be sawed into boards. Four, five and six feet were the common sizes of these forest monarchs."

But in 1885 the work of demolition had already begun. Some five or six years before, a saw mill had been introduced and many of the most magnificent specimens has been felled by the axe.

Be it recorded to the memory of the late Henry Robertson that to the last he clung tenaciously to the old trees, and many of the finest trunks were still standing at the time of his death. Mr. Charles Menefee is the only modern land-owner who has taken any pains to preserve the beauty of the grove, and some of his fine woodland pastures filled with blue-grass are very beautiful.

The waters on the southern slope of this last long ridge are carried away, at the east, by the tributaries of Big Pine Creek—at the center, by Mud Pine—and at the west, by one of the many branches of the Big Vermilion. There is one acre of ground on the land formerly owned by James M. Blasdel at Parish Grove that is drained by tributaries of the Wabash, the Vermilion and the Iroquois rivers respectively. Mud Pine rises in the low swale on the south and west line of the town of Fowler, flows from thence south-east one mile and a quarter, and then turns to the south and south-west, crossing state highway No. 10, about four and one-half miles south of the town of Fowler. From thence it flows in a general south-westerly direction, crossing the public highway just west of the village of Chase and entering Warren County at the south line of section 31-24-8. The banks of this stream in the southern part of the county are in places very high and picturesque and were in places formerly bordered by magnificent groves of white oak. Some of the older settlements of the county were along this creek—a fact amply testified to by the old Smith

and Perigo cemeteries with their long flat headstones and ancient inscriptions.

The largest plain in the county, containing some of the most excellent prairie soil, is drained by Mud Creek, which rises in what was formerly known as Hickory Grove Lake, one mile west of the town of Fowler. Mud Creek drains a basin of approximately 35,000 acres extending from Parish Grove on the south to the long ridge of Earl Park on the north. It flows north-west, entering Sugar Creek on the western edge of Sumner's Grove, at a point about one mile east of the Illinois State line.

Hickory Grove Lake formerly covered two hundred acres of land and was the favorite resort of hunters from Lafayette, Cincinnati and Chicago. There were large spaces of open water between the many islands of rushes, and the borders were lined with rushes, willows and gigantic bullgrass. The high rush-stalks formed almost perfect coverts from which the hunters slaughtered hundreds of wild ducks and black-head geese. The northern shore of this lake was bordered by Hickory Grove, which in 1870 was much larger in extent than at the present time. A boy who visited this grove in the spring of 1874, relates that on emerging upon the northern shore of the lake the whole air seemed to be filled with the honking of the wild geese and that their countless thousands almost obscured the sun. About 1880 or 1881, Moses Fowler conceived the idea of draining this lake in order to redeem the valu-

able farming lands about its borders. One Owen Barton, with a force of about twenty men, cut a large channel with spades on the western line, and eventually the lake bed became dry. Fifty acres of the bottom were composed of peat or muck lands, and in the fall of 1890, this caught on fire and continued to burn until the late fall rains extinguished the smoulder.

We have thus attempted to impart some faint impression of the contour and outline of this beautiful rolling plain of Benton County. But the mind of man involuntarily renders praise and homage to the invisible Power that throughout the countless centuries of the past has moulded this garden for the habitation of man. One has happily said: "The prairies of Illinois and Indiana were born of water and preserved by fire for the children of civilized men, who have come and taken possession of them."

Ages ago, the surface of this county was of solid rock. West and north of Fowler was a comparatively level tract of gray limestone. The rock was worn smooth, except for great holes and depressions that appeared here and there scooped out of the level. This western plain descended gently to the south until on a line with Parish Grove, when the descent became more rapid into the deep valley that extended across the county from east to west. To the north and east of Fowler the rocks were still smooth on the surface, but they were much higher, and at Mt. Nebo and Gilboa the gray St. Louis limestones appeared

capped with conglomerate sandstone. North-east of Earl Park, over in Newton County, the tilted limestone in the old McKee quarry would appear like quite a mountain. East and south of Fowler, for a distance of five or six miles the uneven surface of the Keokuk limestones appeared, but beyond this was a rapid fall into what is now the valley of Big Pine. A great gorge, following the line of Pine from Gilboa to the south, came to within three miles of the Warren County line, when it turned abruptly to the right and crossed over to the south-west corner of the county.

Other years pass, and from the far-off ice fields of the north come the great glaciers—the Wisconsin ice sheet, bearing in their bosoms the earth, clay, sand, gravel and rocks that now make up the surface of the county. With grinding, crushing force they come, filling up the great holes and depressions—filling up the great gorge along Pine Creek and to the south—dropping those great boulders or "nigger-heads," called in the early days "The Lost Rocks," that afterwards appeared in such great numbers on the early prairie. How deep is this glacial drift? Over the top of Nebo it is 82 feet—in the valley at Templeton where the great gorge ran, it is 262 feet.

The great plan of the Infinite goes forward. For ages onward the great fields of drift, covered by water, later swept by fire, are exposed to the elements. The surface crumbles and disintegrates, and out of all this grand conspiracy of ice, water

Sugar Creek Before Dredging

After Dredging

ing, food-supplying centers of the Republic, but up to the early 70's little had been done to render the fertile plains of Benton County fit for the plow. Sloughs and ponds abounded, filled with miasma and croaking frogs—fever and ague and malarial fevers prevailed—greenhead flies swarmed in the lowlands and in the tall bull-grass, tormenting the horses and cattle—roads wound around the bogs and marshes, and for weeks at a time, were wholly impassable—crops were precarious—often a failure. The census of 1870 shows a total production of 121,842 bushels of oats, and 458,857 bushels of corn. In 1900 the production of oats alone was 3,282,120 bushels—of corn, 5,315,750 bushels. It is true that the population had grown from 5,615 to 13,123, or about 234 per cent—but the increase in the yield of oats was over 2693 per cent. and the increase in the yield of corn over 1158 per cent. The outstanding fact that has made these things possible, and converted these wet savannas into the beautiful gardens of the present day—is the introduction of a system of highly successful land drainage, thus lowering the water tables, and rendering the soil dry and arable.

In 1870 the condition of the prairie farmer in Benton County was not to be envied. To eke a living out of the stubborn glebe was no mean task. We have it on the authority of an old settler that there was scarcely a field of twenty acres that did not border on a slough. There was no under-drainage whatever. Only the higher lands

along the ridges were under a state of cultivation. Even these were seepy and wet and in a rainy season the corn was thin and yellow. The soil, having no tile drains to make it sponge-like and mellow, was often baked hard on the surface and broke up in great lumps. Tools were primitive, and all the labor on the farms had to be done by hand. The prairie hay had to be pitched with the fork—all grain was bound by hand. Much of the land in the central part of the county was then covered with huge boulders, or "nigger-heads," and one had to farm around these as best he could. The fields, on account of the many ponds and sloughs, consisted of small patches of irregular shape. The horses plunged through the mud, fought with green-heads, were skinny and cadaverous throughout the entire working season, and were often hauled out to the edge of the creek to have their bones picked by the crows. The ground, having but little power of absorption, could not drink up the great rains, and frequently the farmer could not get into his fields for a whole week. Often the weeds obtained such a start as to lead to the abandonment of the crop. In 1870 the farmers in the central and southern parts of the county did most of their marketing at Lafayette. Not a single railroad spanned the county. The condition of the prairie roads was such that only twenty-five or thirty bushels of grain could be hauled in a load. Two whole days were required to make the journey to and from the banks of the Wabash. The farmer took along the grain

to feed his horses and often stayed at night at the old Bramble. No drainage—an oozy soil—rocks, sloughs, green-head flies—no roads—no markets—poor schools—these were the discouraging obstacles that barred the path of progress.

Still, there were courageous men who did not falter. Given a favorable season and the virgin soil put forth enormous yields. If only the low lands might be redeemed, here was the superior loam, and the returns of husbandry would at once mount upwards. One problem was already solved. Early in the 70's, the Lafayette, Muncie and Bloomington Railroad, now the Lake Erie, was built through Oxford, and about the same time the Cincinnati, Indianapolis, St. Louis and Chicago, now the Big Four, was constructed from Templeton to Kankakee and ran directly through the central portion of the county. The farmers of the Grand Prairie were at last put in touch with the markets of the world.

Let us here make an observation. The logical successor of Henry L. Ellsworth was Moses Fowler. The great ambition of his later years was to build up a large landed estate, a prairie barony, graze it with his herds, plant it in fields of grain, and pass it on to his family and descendants. With this end in view, he had acquired about twenty-six thousand acres of land south and west of the present town of Fowler, and in company with Adams Earl he had now built the Kankakee short line, or C. I. St. L. & C. Railroad, to connect this vast domain with the city markets. His faith in the

future development of the prairie soil was unbounded. Prior to 1870, he had engaged Col. William J. Templeton, Isaac and Zimri Lewis and Jasper McConnell, to break up the sections of the long ridge south of the present county seat. To carry out this project they had gone one hundred fifty miles south of Sedalia, Missouri, had purchased five car-loads of oxen, eight yoke to the car, had driven them through the streets of St. Louis, crossed the ferry, loaded them on the Wabash railroad, and had driven them overland from the village of West Lebanon. Col. Templeton had sub-soiled two hundred acres of this splendid land and had raised in a favorable year from eighty to one hundred bushels of corn to the acre. The same fall he brought through six hundred head of long-horned Texas cattle, taught them to eat corn during the following winter, herded them on the prairie grass and sold them at a fine profit in the markets of New York. The possibilities of the situation were very promising. Fowler now determined to ditch out the bogs and sloughs—lower the water level— and convert the marshes into grass lands and fields. With a new line of iron rails and a new town close at hand the prospect was propitious.

About 1875 or 1876 a strange apparation appeared upon the plains which attracted men from far and near. Twelve yoke of oxen were strung out in a long line, driven by "bull-whackers," with high-topped boots, who, with long black-snake whips and monstrous oaths, urged them through

the watery wastes. Following behind was a large plow equipped with a lever, cutting a V shaped ditch from two to three feet deep, from two to three feet wide on the bottom, and from four to six feet in width at the top. The dirt was pushed out on the banks by two wooden mould-boards about four feet in height and attached to the body of the plow by frames of steel. Rude as was this contrivance, it spelled the work of progress. The waters under the heavens were gathered together unto one place and the dry land appeared. The huge oxen floundered in the mire, were thrown to their knees when the steel point struck a hidden boulder, but here and there across the prairies the first primitive drains were cut, the blue-grass set in, and later the breaking plow completed the work of civilization. A geologist visiting this county ten years after these ditches had been made, described them as being in very good condition, and as having washed out much wider and deeper with the running water. A ditch made by this plow in section 13-25-9, in Parish Grove Township, has washed out until it is twenty or thirty feet wide at the top, and several feet in depth.

This is the famous plow of George McAlister, long remembered by the people as the pioneer ditcher of the county. In company with a gentleman of Fowler, we recently visited the scene of the first drain cut by McAlister in Gilboa Township, in sections 31, 32 and 33-26-6. He also cut a branch to this main line which extended into sections 29 and 28, past the old place of Daniel Hawk.

The great marsh in the first named sections was so deep and miry that McAlister had to use capstans set out to one side—pulling his machine forward with long cables.

The days of McAlister were followed by the years 1881 and 1882, when there were erected at several points in the county the first manufactories of clay tile. The history of tile drainage in the middle west, and especially in the State of Indiana, is of such absorbing interest that we deem it proper at this place to give a brief account of that enterprise. The draining of the lands being necessary to successful agriculture, and agriculture being the basic industry of the nation, we touch on no light topic. Health, wealth and sanitation are all involved, and the departure of the red-winged blackbird and the swamp, marked the induction of a higher order. The agitation for drain tile started in this state between the years 1870 and 1880. One of the leaders in that agitation was J. J. W. Billingsley, of Marion County, who founded the Drainage Journal, and who has been aptly termed as the "father" of tile drainage in the State of Indiana. In 1870 there were probably about 80 mills in the entire state, most of which were manufacturing the flat-bottomed tile. In 1880 the number had increased to 486, and in the year 1883 there were 661, or 34 per cent of the entire number in the United States. An interesting table in the agricultural reports for the year 1882, gives the whole number of miles of tile drain in the United States as 52,674.

Of that number, Indiana had 14,000; Illinois, 20,000; Ohio, 13,000. In other words, of all the drain tile then laid in the Republic, these three states had about 90 per cent. In the year 1882, Indiana laid nearly as many miles of tile as in all the former years of her history.

The first tile mill in Benton County was erected on the north-east quarter of section 1-26-10 in York Township, and on the lands later purchased by Baltus Brown. This factory was built by William M. Tryon, usually known as "Mack" Tryon, about the year 1873 or 1874 and had three kilns. Tryon manufactured a flat-bottomed tile, mostly three and four inch, and a number of the older farms in the vicinity of Raub are underlaid with these drains, notably, the farms of John Fleming and George Portteus. Some of these burnt clays of Tryon have worked successfully for over a half century.

But the real commencement of the tile industry in this county dates from the year 1881, when John Fernald of Frankfort, came forward to the little station of Templeton and began the manufacture of cylindrical clay tile. The same year John Kaar, of Union Township erected a factory at Lochiel, 18x150 feet, the next year enlarging it to 34x185 feet, with a shed forty-one feet square. From this time forward the development was rapid. In the spring of 1882, William Lawson, who had been producing flat-bottomed tile at Frankfort, came to the growing young town of Fowler to bore for clay. He found favorable speci-

mens, but was unable to make suitable arrangements with Moses Fowler, and later in the same year began the construction of his mills at the town of Oxford. In the fall of 1882, J. P. Smith & Co., composed of J. Preston Smith, John F. Barnard and Walter B. Hixson, began the erection of a tile mill at the site of the present "ice-pond," at the south-west corporate limits of the town of Fowler, building at first a factory 20x150 feet with one kiln—in 1883 enlarging this plant to 20x550 and constructing two additional kilns. The main output of all these factories was a three, four or five inch tile—William Smith, the former manager of The Fowler Steam Tile Works, recently stating that the output of 4's exceeded the aggregate of all the other sizes.

The boom was now on with a vengeance. Despite the croakings of certain pessimists who declared that the laying of tile would dry up the whole state and reduce the country to a sterile desert—despite the publication of articles in the local press declaring that man was committing a sacrilege and reversing the order of Nature—the manufacture moved forward with ever-increasing strides. So great was the demand that all the plants in the county were strained to their utmost capacity—farmers actually loading the tile hot from the kilns—and hauling them out to lay before the spring plowing. The result was remarkable. In the next two decades thousands of acres of the most valuable loam in the county were reduced to a state of perfect cultivation—the water

tables were everywhere lowered—an excess of drought and moisture alike removed—the land warmed and sweetened for the growth of grain seeds—and the production of crops rendered certain and secure. These things in turn brought about an increase in the market value of the lands—led to the building of improvements and the beautifying of the country—and thus the march of civilization and enlightenment was everywhere accelerated.

The methods employed in land drainage since the early 80's and 90's have materially altered. Most of the main ditches and watercourses of that day were winding and shallow, greatly retarding the flow of the waters—the outlets were insufficient—and proper aerification of the soil could not be secured. In late years many of the streams and water-courses have been deepened and widened with powerful dredges—large main lines of outlet tile have been constructed, laid deep in the ground—and the lateral drains have been increased both in size and in efficiency. Notwithstanding all these changes, however, the old clay factories were a decided success, and while they have given away to the modern production of shale and cement, they led the way to the final redemption of this prairie empire.

The most recent of the great drainage improvements in Benton County was the widening and deepening of the lower waters of Sugar Creek during the World War, which involved the removal of 718,481 cubic yards of earth and the

expenditure of about $120,000 in money. The work was done by a large floating dredge of the dipper type, and the whole length of the excavation was fourteen and eight-tenths miles. The dredge boat set in at the lower or south side of section 32-25-8, south of Turkey Foot Grove, and thence extended in a general northerly direction about three miles, draining Turkey Foot Lake in section 29 and its peat lands, and joining the main line of Sugar one mile west of State Highway No. 10. Thence it extended almost due west about four miles, passing to the north and then to the west of the town of Earl Park. Thence it extended south-west for a distance of eight miles, cutting through Sugar or Sumner's Grove, and ending at the Indiana-Illinois line.

The importance of this venture can hardly be over-estimated. The whole basin affected, contained approximately 35,000 acres, five thousand of which were entirely redeemed and rendered immune to floods. What had before been a winding, meandering stream—at places actually doubling back in its course—became a wide, deep channel, sweeping in straight lines for a mile at a stretch, and carrying the waters forward with doubled velocity. Besides this, many main tile drains, affecting thousands of acres of the best land, were afforded better and more complete outlets—the public health was greatly benefitted, and many highways materially improved.

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DESIRABLE SOIL CONDITIONS—HOW FAR SECURED BY TILE DRAINAGE.

By Prof. W. G. Latta, of Purdue University.

"**First.** The water of each rainfall should be gradually removed (in 24 to 48 hours) by percolation through the soil. Each square foot of surfact should absorb the rain that it receives from the clouds, neither borrowing of its neighbor above or lending to its neighbor below. That is, the ideal condition would permit no lateral movement of water on the surface, and thus prevent any transfer of fertile matter from one point to another. Of course this condition of things can not be fully secured in the case of a dashing rain on hilly land. There will be some washing of soil from the higher to the lower levels; but this washing should be reduced to the minimum.

Natural drainage, which is chiefly at the surface, signally fails to secure this condition, and the open drain increases the difficulty. The water is not gradually, but hastily removed—removed with a rush—carrying along not only plant food, but the soil itself. On the other hand, under-drainage renders the soil so open, so absorbent, so sponge-like in texture, that the water, which naturally tends vertically downward, finds a ready passage to the underlying drain. The water thus carries into the soil whatever plant food it contains. It is true that, in its passage, it also removes some plant food—a minimum amount, however—which, in accordance with chemical and physical laws, is of a kind that can be best spared.

Second. During the growing season the soil should be constantly in a condition of chemical activity. The soil is not merely a storehouse of plant food but a vast laboratory in which the elements of plant growth are being prepared—manufactured, if you please. Three things are necessary to secure this chemical activity of the soil, viz.: warmth, air and moisture. By moisture I mean such a degree of wetness as the soil will retain after the removal of the free water. Thorough under drainage secures all these prerequisites of a chemically active soil in an admirable degree by lowering the line of free water to the level of the drain. It is therefore evident that drainage not only dries the land, but also in a very important degree enriches it by making possible the elabor-

ation of available plant food from the crude materials of the soil.

Third. The soil should be constantly moist during the growing season, that is, exempt alike from excess or deficiency of water. This state of constant moisture is essential to constant chemical activity of the soil; it is necessary as a means of conveying the elaborated plant food of the soil to the plant, and it is required to meet the constant and heavy demands of the growing crop, which, during almost the entire period of growth, is 75 to 90 per cent water. Can under-drainage secure this desirable condition of the soil? It would seem at first that it can not, as the function of the drain is to remove an excess of water and not to supply a deficiency of that element. Let us see. The deficiency of water during drouth is principally in the upper layers of soil. There is generally enough water in the lower strata, and the plant has only to push its roots deeper into the soil to obtain an adequate supply. The plant grown on undrained land is shallow-rooted, and hence suffers during drouth, because unable to reach the receding water below. The plant on drained land has a firm hold on the lower and moister soil, and hence passes through a drouth with little or no injury. In other words, if drainage can not carry water to the plant in a dry time it can lead the plant to the water by enabling it to send its roots deep into the earth to the more abiding supply of moisture. In addition to this, drainage permits more frequent and thorough cultivation, which

acts as a mulch, and thus conserves the moisture of the lower soil. There is and will be difference of opinion as to the manner in which drainage mitigates the severity of drouths. But the fact remains, however we may account for it, that drained lands have an immense advantage over the undrained in dry as well as in wet seasons.

Fourth. The soil should be able to furnish an abundant supply of plant food, at all times fully adequate to the demands of the rapidly growing crop. A shallow soil of six to twelve inches, however fertile and chemically active it may be, is not sufficient. As well undertake to drive a 10-horse power engine with a 5-horse power boiler as to expect a maximum crop from a shallow soil. When we remember that about 90 per cent. of the soil is clay and sand, which are not plant food at all, and that only an exceedingly minute fraction of the soil is available for plant food the importance of a large volume of earth, in which the plant roots may ramify and feed, is apparent. Here again the drain comes to our aid, as it is one of the prime functions of drainage to deepen the soil. Indeed, thorough drainage frequently doubles and even triples the depth of aerated and nourishing soil. It is drainage, therefore, that will enable one to make two blades of grass grow where but one grew before, since it gives feeding room for two roots where but one fed of yore. Instead of heeding Horace Greeley's advice to "go west," many a farmer would do well to go deeper into

his soil and thus increase his acres and his yields without adding to his taxes.

Fifth. Our lowlands, covered with the stagnant waters of surface drainage from the higher levels, and our marshes, miry with the ooze water from higher ground, should be reclaimed from their watery thralldom and made productive of something more valuable and wholesome than frogs and malaria. Systematic drainage has converted thousands of acres of such soil into good arable land, and given us salubrious air instead of the poisonous miasm. By all means, therefore, let the work of draining the wet lands go on, and when it becomes too great for local enterprise the State should take it up. It should be borne in mind, however, that the thorough draining of the heavy uplands will greatly reduce the excess of water on the lowlands."

36th Annual Report, St. Board of Agriculture, 1886, pp. 197-199.

STATISTICAL TABLE FOR BENTON COUNTY.

Number of Farms, Value, Live Stock, and Crops.
1850 to 1920.

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920
No. of Farms	149	.....	.....	1,406	1,341	1,351	1,271	1,255
Acres Improved	12,100	15,649	133,812	210,818	223,466	249,904	252,196	253,194
Value, with Improvements	$288,928	1,211,466	4,300,560	5,820,350	8,663,930	15,767,120	35,128,959	60,679,349
Horses, Asses & Mules	644	1,957	3,429	7,588	10,248	10,762	12,051	10,683
Working Oxen	.....	97	140	28	.....	.....	.....	.....
Neat Cattle	3,132	4,959	.....	14,636	16,066	15,448	11,072	15,511
Milch Cows	.....	.....	1,906	3,149	4,310	4,112	3,907	5,757
Sheep	1,524	3,849	5,143	3,593	2,687	4,725	5,609	4,503
Swine	3,991	7,212	8,566	28,916	34,206	30,624	25,250	38,188
Wheat, bushels	2,612	5,536	50,513	71,161	7,284	1,600	11,299	181,631
Oats, bushel	.....	8,871	121,842	476,642	2,028,985	3,282,120	2,767,206	2,998,880
Corn, bushels	160,400	346,888	458,857	3,315,387	2,224,510	5,315,750	5,070,270	4,204,090
Hay, tons	948	1,073	6,659	16,082	25,575	15,702	13,930	7,318

CHAPTER V.

The Grand Prairie

STRAWBERRIES.

BENTON County being a part of the Grand Prairie, of Illinois, the following is appropriate.

On Sunday, the third day of November, 1811, General Harrison's army, with scouts in front and wagons lumbering along between the flanks, crossed the Big Vermilion river, traversed Sand Prairie and the woods to the north of it, and in the afternoon of the same day caught their first glimpse of "The Grand Prairie," in Warren County, then wet with the cold November rains. That night they camped in Round Grove, near the present town of Sloan, marched eighteen miles across the prairie the next day, and camped on the east bank of Pine Creek, just north of the old site of Brier's Mills. To the most of them at least, the sight must have been both novel and grand; if they could have known then that the vast undulating plain before them stretched westward in unbroken grandeur, a distance of two hundred fifty miles to the Mississippi river at Quincy; that these vast possessions in a few short

years would pass from the control of the savage tribes that roamed over them, and would become the future great granaries of the world, producing enough cereals to feed an empire, what must have been their thoughts!

The magnitude of this great plain, now teeming with thousands of homes and farms, is seldom realized. Draw a line straight west from old Fort Vincennes to the Mississippi, and practically all north of it, to the Wisconsin line is "The Grand Prairie." "Westward of the Wabash, except occasional tracts of timbered land is northern Indiana, and fringes of forest growth along the intervening watercourses, the prairie stretched westward continuously across Indiana, and the whole of Illinois to the Mississippi. Taking the line of the Wabash railway, which crosses Illinois in its greatest breadth, and beginning in Indiana where the railway leaves the timber, west of the Wabash near Marshfield (in Warren County), the prairie extends to Quincy, a distance of more than two hundred and fifty miles, and its continuity the entire way is only broken by four strips of timber along four streams running at right angles with the route of the railway, namely, the timber on the Vermilion river between Danville and the Indiana State line; the Sangamon, seventy miles west of Danville, near Decatur; the Sangamon again a few miles east of Springfield, and the Illinois river at Meredosia. And all the timber at the crossing of these several streams, if put together, would not aggregate fifteen miles

against the two hundred and fifty miles of prairie. Taking a north and south direction and parallel with the drainage of the rivers, one could start near Ashley, on the Illinois Central Railway, in Washington County, and going northward, nearly on an air line, keeping on the divide between Kaskaskia and the Little Wabash, the Sangamon and the Vermillion, the Iroquois and the Vermillion of the Illinois, crossing the latter stream between the mouths of the Fox and DuPage, and travel through to the State of Wisconsin, a distance of nearly three hundred miles, without encountering five miles of timber during the whole journey."

All that portion of Indiana lying north and west of the Wabash, is essentially a part of "The Grand Prairie." "Of the twenty-seven counties in Indiana, lying wholly or partially west and north of the Wabash, twelve are prairie, seven are mixed prairies, barrens and timber, the barrens and prairie predominating. In five, the barrens, with the prairies, are nearly equal to the timber, while only three of the counties can be characterized as heavily timbered. And wherever timber does occur in these twenty-seven counties, it is found in localities favorable to its protection against the ravages by fire, by the proximity of intervening lakes, marshes or watercourses." On the Indiana side, the most pronounced of the tracts of prairie occur in western Warren, Benton, southern and central Newton, southern Jasper, and western White and Tippecanoe. Benton was or-

Menefee Farm at Parish Grove

iginally covered with a great pampas of blue-stem, high as a horse's head, interspersed here and there with swamps of willows and bull-grass, while only narrow fringes of timber along the creeks, and some five or six groves of timber and woodland, widely scattered, served as land marks to the early traveler.

Those who early observed and explored the grassy savannas of Indiana and Illinois, always maintained that they were kept denuded of trees and forests by the action of the great prairie fires. Among those who have supported this theory are the Hon. James Hall, author of **The West,** published in Cincinnati in 1848; the Hon. John Reynolds, former governor of the State of Illinois, and the Hon. John B. Caton, a late judge of the supreme court of Illinois. Caton's observations on this subject are so interesting and ingenious that we cannot refrain from making the following quotation:

"The cause of the absence of trees on the upland prairies is the problem most important to the agricultural interests of our state, and it is the inquiry which alone I propose to consider, but cannot resist the remark that wherever we do find timber throughout the broad field of prairie, it is always in or near the humid portions of it, as along the margins of streams, or upon or near the springy uplands. Many most luxuriant growths are found on the highest portions of the uplands, but always in the neighborhood of water. For a remarkable example, I may refer to the

great chain of groves extending from and including the Au Sable Grove on the east and Holderman's Grove on the west, in Kendall County, occupying the high divide between the waters of the Illinois and the Fox rivers. In and around all the groves flowing springs abound, and some of them are separated by marshes, to the borders of which the great trees approach, as if the forest was ready to seize upon each yard of ground as soon as it is elevated above the swamp. Indeed, all our groves seem to be located where water is so disposed as to protect them, to a greater or less extent, from the prairie fire, although not so situated as to irrigate them. If the head waters of the streams on the prairies are most frequently timber, as soon as they have attained sufficient volume, to impede the progress of the fires, with very few exceptions, we find forests on their borders, becoming broader and more vigorous as the magnitude of the streams increase. It is manifest that the land located on the borders of streams which the fire cannot pass, are only exposed to one-half the fires to which they would be exposed but for such protection. This tends to show, at least, that if but one-half the fires that have occurred had been kindled, the arboraceous growth could have withstood their destructive influences, and the whole surface of what is now prairie would be forest. Another confirmatory fact, patent to all observers, is, that the prevailing winds upon the prairies, especially in the autumn, are from the west, and these give

direction to the prairie fires. Consequently, the lands on the westerly sides of the streams are the most exposed to the fires, and, as might be expected, we find much the most timber on the easterly sides of the streams."

Local observation would seem to confirm these views. Parish Grove, on the old Chicago road, in Benton County, was filled with springs, and a rather large spring on the west side of the grove, supplied water for the horses of the emigrants and travelers who took this route to the northwest in the early 40's. Besides this, the grove was situated on rather high upland, where the growth of grass would be much shorter than on the adjoining plains. It is probable that this spring on the west side, and the springy nature of the highlands back of it, kept the ground moist and the vegetation green, and these facts, coupled with the fact that the grass as it approached the uplands would grow shorter, probably retarded and checked the prairie fires from the southwest, and gave rise to the wonderfully diversified and luxuriant growth of trees that was the wonder of the early settlers. Sugar Grove, seven miles to the northwest of Parish Grove, and a stopping place on the old Chicago road, lay mostly within the point or headland caused by the junction of Sugar Creek from the northeast and Mud Creek from the southeast. Scarcely a tree is on the southwestern bank of Mud Creek, but where it widens on the south side of the grove, it protected the growth of the forest on the northern side.

Turkey Foot grove, east and south of Earl Park, formerly had a lake and depression both on the south and west sides of it. Hickory Grove, just west of Fowler, in the early days had a lake or pond on the south and west. The timber that skirted the banks of Pine Creek, was heaviest on the eastern side.

STRAWBERRIES

A writer in 1837, speaking of the prairies of Illinois, notes the following: "The soil is of the finest quality. In the season of flowers, the eye and all the senses receive the highest gratification. In time of strawberries, thousands of acres are reddened with the finest quality of this delicious fruit." The prairies in Benton County, as the author remembers them in the early 80's, presented at intervals large patches of strawberries, and in the season of blossom, they were filled with bumble-bees, bearing away the precious burden of honey. These strawberries were so thick in places as to actually redden the prairie, as stated by the Illinois observer. It would seem that their flavor was most delicious, and much better and sweeter than the strawberries grown in our modern gardens.

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CHAPTER VI.

Maskotia, the Place of the Fire

NOTES ON THE PRAIRIE.

THE savage, that true child of nature, speaking the language his great mother had taught him, called the prairie, "Mas-ko-tia," or "The Place of the Fire." The name was appropriate, for those giant conflagrations, feeding on the tall, dry grass of the autumn savannas, and fanned into a fiery hurricane by the western winds, at night time illuminated the whole heavens, and sweeping onward with the speed of the wild horse, left nothing behind them but the blackened and smoking plains.

Imagine, if you will, thousands of acres and mile upon mile of the early prairie, covered in most places with giant blue-stem and the coarse blades of the bull-grass. A party of land hunters riding through Benton County in the fall of 1824 and following the line of an old Indian trail, found blue-stem so high that a horseman could tie the ends over the top of his head. An observer of the prairies around Danville, Illinois, testified that: "the grass grew so high that it was a source

of amusement to tie the tops over the withers of a horse, and in places the height of the grass would nearly obscure both horse and rider from view." Now let the drought of August and the frost of September come, and all the plain be turned to a russet and brown of dry, waving grass, and let some party of Indians set the prairie on fire to start up the game, or some unwary traveler let a camp fire start a blaze when a heavy wind is on, and almost in a moment a maelstrom of destruction is sweeping over the plain, licking up and destroying everything in its path.

The rushing noise of the hurricane, the shooting flames leaping fifteen or twenty feet in the air, the vast billows of smoke rolling up into the heavens, made these prairie fires a terrible sight to the early squatter, who, unless he had taken the precaution to plough some furroughs about his premises, and had burned out the inside of the circle, or had adopted some other expedient known to the early settler, was likely to see the work of his whole season, ricks of hay, stacks of grain, fields of corn, and all else, destroyed like a flash. At night-time, if one was at a point of safety, the spectacle was one long to be remembered. An advancing fire in the night-time is thus described: "When a fire starts under favorable conditions, the horizon gleams brighter and brighter until a fiery redness rises above its dark outline, while heavy, slow-moving masses of dark clouds curve upward above it. In another moment the blaze itself shoots up, first at one

spot, then at another, advancing until the whole horizon extending across the wide prairie, is clothed with flames that roll and curve and dash onward and upward like waves of a burning ocean, lighting up the landscape with the brilliancy of noon-day. A roaring, crackling sound is heard, like the rushing of a hurricane. The flame, which in general rises to the height of twenty feet, is seen rolling its waves against each other, as the liquid, fiery mass moves forward, leaving behind it a blackened surface on the ground, and long trails of murky smoke floating above." The vivid description above is given by Judge James Hall, an early observer of these great fires. His description is verified by the late Alonzo D. Sleeper, of Fowler, who was raised on the prairies. He lived in 1860 just west of the town of Oxford. To the north some eight or nine miles extended a long line of rolling uplands, constituting the long ridge just south of the present town of Fowler. A fire along this ridge at night lighted up the whole heavens so that a printed page could be read at the Sleeper home.

"A prairie fire when first started, goes straight forward with a velocity proportioned to the force of the wind, widening as it goes, but the center keeping ahead; it spreads sideways, but burning laterally, it makes but comparatively slow progress; and if the wind is moderate and steady, this spreading fire is not difficult to manage, but if the wind veers a point or two, first one way and then the other, it sends this fire beyond control.

The head fire in dry grass and a head wind is a fearful thing, and pretty sure to have its own way unless there is some defensive point to meet it."

The early settlers on the prairie developed great sagacity in coping with these great fires, but sometimes the wind was so strong and the velocity of the fire so great that it seemed to leap all obstacles and forge ahead to the inevitable destruction of the settler's property. The fire fighters were generally able to determine where the head of the fire was coming, by the volume of smoke and ashes flying, and the general outline of the flames. Starting at a plow furrow, which was hastily run with a plow, or a cow-path, or a roadway, or some other base of operations, a "backfire" was set that ran counter to the wind and met the advancing head, which then suddenly died out from the want of material. The fighters would then pass to the right and left and battle with the side fires as they came up, until all danger was past.

Great care had to be exercised, however, in starting the "back fire," for generally the currents of air in front of an oncoming prairie fire were very strong, and the back-fire was likely to leap the furrow or cow-path used as a base, and go with the wind, and then the fighters had to hastily plow another furrow or go back to another point of vantage, if possible. Sometimes the "back fire" was not started in time to burn out a wide area in front of the advancing head fire,

and then the madly rushing flames would leap the gap and rush on to the destruction of the settler's property.

Strange to say, it is not recorded that any settlers' lives were lost in these great fires. The trampling of men and animals around the settler's house and stable and for some distance out from the same, and the fact that live stock generally kept the grass cropped down around the premises, and fields were plowed there, served to protect the settler's home, but the fires often destroyed long lines of his rail fences, great quantities of stacked hay and grain, for in those days the grain was stacked, and leaped into the corn fields and stubble ground. It was to save these precious possessions that the fire fighters worked with both men and teams for long hours at a time, and until men and horses were both utterly exhausted.

One of the strange sights on the early prairies was the great number of so-called "tumble-weeds," seen rolling across the plains by tens of thousands after the frosts, and in the early days of the fall, when the first heavy winds blew. They grew on the early sod lands, were globular in form, and after the frost, became brittle at the base and were easily detached and started rolling by the fall winds. These great weeds would roll up against the long lines of rail fences, and form a huge bank there, and the others would roll over, sometimes bouncing several feet in the air when driven by a heavy gale. This mass of tumble weeds against the rail fences, however, was a per-

fect fire trap, and many a mile of fence has been utterly destroyed by reason of the same.

One of the spectacular sights of the early days was the long lines of side fires burning out in the prairies late in the night. It was very difficult to determine the distance they were away. They might be one mile or ten. But the long lines of shooting flames made you think, somehow, of advancing armies, and lines of men. These were the armies of flame.

An early traveler, Mr. John Bradbury, has observed: "That in a state of nature, these prairies were covered with a luxuriant growth of grass and herbaceous plants, affording a most abundant supply of food for the stock of the new settler; and it is worthy of notice, that any part of these prairies, when constantly fed on by cattle, becomes covered with white clover and the much esteemed blue-grass, (Poa Compressa), as frequent pasturing seems to give these plants a predominance over all others." These facts are vouched for by George H. Jennings and other early settlers of this county.

Following the early squatter on the prairies, came the large stock men, with their herds. The herds kept the long grasses down and blue-grass seized hold of the soil everywhere. The prevalence of large pastures of blue-grass, and the growing acres of cultivated fields, gradually lessened and finally did away with the danger from fires. One of the last of these great blue-grass pastures

remaining in this county, was on the farm of Charles Randolph, on section 31, in township 25 North, Range 8 west, in the extreme south-west corner of Center Township.

NOTES ON THE PRAIRIE

A paragraph taken from "Illinois in 1837," is interesting: "The Indians and hunters annually set fire to the prairies, in order to dislodge the game. The fire spreads with tremendous rapidity and presents one of the grandest and most terrible spectacles in nature. The flames rush through the long grass with a noise like thunder; dense clouds of smoke arise; and the sky itself appears almost on fire, particularly during the night. Travelers then crossing the prairie are sometimes in serious danger, which they can only escape by setting fire to the grass around, and taking shelter in the burned part, where the approaching flame must expire for want of fuel. Nothing can be more melancholy than the aspect of a burnt prairie, presenting a uniform black surface like a vast plain of charcoal."

These are the Gardens of the Desert—these
The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
And fresh as the young earth ere man had sinned.
The Prairies! I behold them for the first,
And my heart swells, while the dilated sight
Takes in the encircling vastness. Lo! they stretch

In airy undulations, far away,
As if the ocean, in his gentlest swell,
Stood still, with all his rounded billows fixed,
And motionless forever.—Motionless—?—
No—they're all unchained again. The clouds
Sweep over with their shadows, and beneath
The surface rolls and fluctuates to the eye:
Dark hollows seem to glide along, and chase
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